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TRACTS

ON THE

Following SUBJECTS,

VIZ.

A brief demonstration of the being and attributes of G O D. To which is added, an argument for the unity of G O D.

On reason, as it relates to morality.

On human liberty.

On the terms of christian communion.

An inquiry how far children are concerned in the sins of their parents.

On the government of the passions.

An inquiry into the true sense of Psalm viii. 34.

An inquiry into the true sense of Matth. xxvii. 46.

An inquiry into the true sense of 1 Cor. xv. 19.

By the late Rev. Mr. HENRY GROVE,
of TAUNTON.

Published from the Author's MANUSCRIPT.

V O L. IV.

L O N D O N,

Printed by JOHN WILSON, at the *Turk's-Head*
in Gracechurch-street.

M DCCXL.

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By the late R. M. HENRY GROVE, LONDON.



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THE CONTENTS OF THE FOURTH VOLUME:

A Brief demonstration of the being and attributes of God. To which is added, an argument for the unity of God. *Page 1.*

On reason, as it relates to morality. 31

On human liberty. 91

On the terms of christian communion. 145

An enquiry how far children are concerned in the sins of their parents. 195

On the government of the passions. 225

An inquiry into the true sense of
Psalm viii. 34. *When I consider thy heavens, the
work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars
which thou hast ordained ; What is man, that thou
art mindful of him ? or the son of man, that
thou visitest him ?* 309

An

The CONTENTS.

An inquiry into the true sense of
 Matth. xxvii. 46. *And about the ninth hour Je-
 sus cried with a loud voice, Eli, Eli, lama
 sabacthani? that is to say, My God, my God,
 why hast thou forsaken me?* 359

An inquiry into the true sense of
 1 Cor. xv. 19. *If in this life only we have hope in
 Christ, we are of all men most miserable.* 395

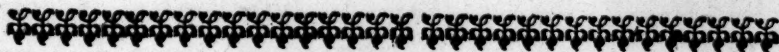




A BRIEF
DEMONSTRATION
OF THE
BEING
AND
ATTRIBUTES
OF
G O D.

To which is added,

An ARGUMENT
FOR THE
UNITY of *G O D.*



VOL. IV.

B

THE

OFFICE

DEMONSTRATION

OF THE

RELIGION

AND

ATTESTED

BY

G. O. D.

TO WHOM

ALL ARE GUMED

FOR THE

UNITED STATES

OF AMERICA

OFFICE



A BRIEF
DEMONSTRATION
OF THE
B E I N G
AND
ATTRIBUTES of GOD.

PROPOSITION I.



SOMETHING *now exists*.---I can hardly suppose any one will be so sceptical as to dispute this with me; for suppose me deceived in every thing else, it is impossible I should be mistaken in believing my own existence. I, *who fancy* a world of objects around me, and *dream* of my eating, talking, writing, and a thousand things of the like nature,

must be, in order to be entertain'd with this fine dream. I, who *think, desire, deliberate, and resolve*, whether the *objects* of these several acts be *real*, or only imaginary, *must exist*; or I could not *exist thinking, desiring, deliberating, resolving*. These, which are so many *modes of existence*, must *presuppose that* whereof they are modes. Allow me but to be in an *error*, and I ask no more: for an error is *something*, and *something* can never be an *attribute of nothing*. I confess I have sometimes been overwhelmed with the thought, that any thing at all exists; that all is not an infinite and eternal nothing: but since 'tis unquestionable that *something exists*, having whereon to fix my foot, from this single principle I can rise by degrees to the idea and proof of a supremely excellent and eternal Being.

P R O P. II.

There can no being exist without some adequate reason or ground of its existence; either in the being itself, or without it, in some other being. This is as self-evident, as that *nothing of itself can arise out of nothing*. Whoever affirms a thing to exist, and at the same time denies there is any *reason* (I do not say known to him, but any) in nature why it exists; absolutely *ascribes an energy or power*

power to nothing, and makes *that* the *reason* of its existence. Nor is the case alter'd by supposing the *eternity* of such a being. An eternal being, *merely as eternal*, differs not but in *duration* from another, which is not eternal. The question therefore returns, what was the reason that this was eternal, rather than the other? If it be said there was no reason; I answer, from hence it will follow, that the *other* might have been eternal as well as *this*; and why then was it not? not because there was nothing to determine its existence rather than its non-existence; for surely, *all things* may have existed eternally, *without a reason*, as well *any one*. It was not therefore from *eternity*, because it was not; which is just as good sense as to say, It is now, because it is.

COROLLARY.

Chance can be the original of nothing: for *chance*, if it be not put to signify the powers and operations of *beings*, is an *empty insignificant* sound; and that which itself is not, cannot be the reason that any thing else is.

P R O P. III.

Tho' with regard to the greater part of beings, it is undeniable, that the reason of their
B 3
existence

existence is eternal; so that they would not have existed, but that there was some Being before them, from whom they derived their original: yet this cannot be affirmed of all beings, and of every being. An external reason must exist somewhere, and in some being or other: the consequence of which is, that if all beings flow from an external cause, there will exist something not included within the list of all beings; which is an express contradiction. There is therefore a *first* being, *self-existent* and *independent*; the reason of whose being is no where to be sought for but in himself.

P R O P. IV.

THE being which contains in itself the reason of its own existence, cannot but exist, or is necessarily existing. For as the reason of its existence is necessary, not liable to the controul of a superior being; (for then this would not be the *first* or self-existing) nor depending upon its own will (because then it must have been before it was, in order to chuse whether it would or would not exist) the existence which flows from this reason must be necessary too.

P R O P. V.

P R O P. V.

A BEING necessarily existing, must be an infinitely perfect being. Some quality or perfection necessarily attends or cleaves to being; and therefore if a being exist necessarily, it must necessarily exist, having some quality or perfection; and for the *same* reason that it has *any one* perfection, and in *any one* degree, it must be possess'd of *all possible* perfections, and in *all possible* degrees: for the several perfections, and the several degrees of perfection, being in themselves *equally possible*, why should it exist endow'd with any one perfection, and in any one degree, rather than with another, or than with all, and in all possible degrees? According to our conceptions, *infinity* is the ground of *necessary existence*: my meaning is, that a being therefore exists necessarily, because it exists infinitely, or so as to fill up the whole idea or possibility of being. If *one* finite may exist necessarily, why may not *all*, being all *equal*? The reason for this cannot be fetch'd from the things themselves. But let us try the argument on particular attributes.

1. *ETERNITY*, or a duration without beginning, must belong to the necessarily-existent Being. For supposing a time when this

Being did not exist, it could never afterwards have begun to be, because it must then have been without any reason or ground of its existence ; which is impossible, by *Prop. IV.* for any such reason could not exist *before* the being itself wherein it was seated. What farther could make that necessarily to exist this moment, which existed not the moment before ; when the present moment differs not but in the order of succession from any or all of those which are past. The same reason, if there be any, which is now, must have been from eternity.

2. *IMMENSITY*, or a *presence without bounds*, is another attribute. That the supreme and necessarily existent Being is thus omnipresent, is evident ; for he could not have his presence *confin'd* to any certain measure of space, without some *reason* of his possessing just such a quantity of space, and not a greater or less : but since between a cubical foot of space, and immensity on the one hand, there are *infinite* intermediate degrees, and *indefinite* between a cubical foot of space and a single point on the other ; what could determine the self-existent being to such, or any other precise quantity of space, rather than any other of the innumerable degrees ascending or descending ?

AGAIN, if the *necessarily existent Being* is limited in his presence, I ask whether, like
an

an *idol*, he be fix'd to a place, or is capable of moving from one place to another? The *first* cannot be; for since the idea of space is *uniform*, and every way alike, there can be no *possible* reason for fixing him immovably in one place more than in any other: nor the *latter*, because rest and motion not co-existing in the same subject, one of them must be eternally *prior* to the other: but rest could not have been the primæval state of the first being, if of a finite presence; because thro' the perfect similitude of space, there was nothing in the nature of the thing to necessitate its eternal abode in *one* portion of the infinite void above *any other*. And this argument bears as strongly against motion; since whatever being changes its place, is in the place it leaves, before it is in that into which it next passes; and consequently there must have been some place where the motion first began, and consequently there was rest before there could be motion.

A LATE ingenious *author**, after having ascribed the glory of all possible perfection to the necessarily existent Being, is very laboured in his attempt to disprove *absolute immensity*; asserting the extension of this Being, tho' it be the utmost possible, and the
very

* *Colliber* in his impartial Inquiry into the Nature and Existence of God.

very same as space, to have certain *limits* or *extremities*. In opposition to which unheard of *paradox*, I take leave to say, that the *possibility* of any being or attribute is in *nature antecedent* to that being or attribute, and consequently the possibility of extension to its actual existence. And what is the possibility of extension, but a capacity or room for it to exist? or what this capacity or room but space? which shows, I think evidently, that space, which is *prior* in *nature* to all beings, is not itself a being, nor the property of a being; since upon that supposition it would demand *another* space or capacity of existence before it could exist, and so one space must be pre-required to another *in infinitum*. Supposing space then to be a *mere void*, I proceed to argue, that this void cannot be *finite*; because if finite, it must have *extremities*, it must be *figured*, it must be *extended*, i. e. must be a *real something*, contrary to what has been already proved, that it is *nothing*. We may indeed in our *imagination*s inclose a portion of space, and thereby give it some figure; but as this inclosure is only imaginary, so the figure thence arising belongs to a mere imaginary extension. The void space must therefore be *endless*; and being endless, will afford *room* for a boundless or infinite Being: for while the void is
infinite,

infinite, 'tis certain no finite amplitude or presence can be the greatest possible.

BUT let us grant space to be proper extension, and this extension an attribute of the divine Being: still if it be the *utmost* extension possible, it is not it cannot be *finite*. For if it be possible for any finite quantity of extension to exist without space presupposed, farther additions will be always possible; since there will be nothing to exclude endless additions to any supposeable quantity, but what must have excluded the least quantity whatsoever. Once you suppose any being may exist of a certain determinate magnitude without space to receive it, you are obliged to go on and grant, that tho' a being possess universal extension, inasmuch that there is no space where that being does not exist; yet if that being be finite, 'tis possible to add to his extension: what should hinder that there is no farther space? But you say, that antecedently (I mean not in *time* but *nature*) to the existence of this being there was no space at all; so that the existence of this being was the cause or reason of space: which if true, 'tis but to suppose (what may be supposed without a contradiction) a being of greater amplitude to exist, and there will be more space.

3. *SIMPLICITY* is another attribute of the necessarily existent Being. A simple substance

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is *opposed* to one which is *made up of parts*; whether the parts be dissimilar, as those of a human body; or homogeneous, as the parts of air or fire. The word *whole* is a *collective* term, signifying not so strictly *one thing* as *several* in combination: which shows beyond all contradiction, that the necessarily existent Being is endowed with the most absolute simplicity. For in all *aggregates*, of what nature soever the parts are, *each particle* has a *separate* existence, and a *separate reason* of its existence; so that notwithstanding the necessary existence of one or all *separately*, there would be no necessity of their existence in *conjunction*; each having the reason of it's existence within itself uncommunicated with the rest. And of consequence there would be *as many* necessarily existent beings as there were *distinct particles*; which is impossible: because upon this supposition each of them could not be immense, as I have proved the Being must be which exists necessarily.

COROLLARY.

THE material world *is not self-existent*, whether considered as to the several constituent parts, because *no one* part is *immense*; or as to the *whole*, tho' we should grant the extension of the whole to be infinite: because

cause every particle having an entire existence of its own, the whole system, whether in the order we now behold it, or in any other, could not proceed from one common reason or ground of its existence.

4. THE attribute of OMNISCIENCE, or the knowledge of all things possible to be known, is also connected with the idea of the necessarily existent Being. Knowledge is a possible perfection; we are conscious of such a perfection in ourselves, neither is it inconsistent with any other perfection of the first Being. His simplicity on the contrary, otherwise stiled his spirituality, naturally leads us to the notion of intelligence, as entirely agreeable to his pure and undivided essence. He therefore who possesses all possible perfections, must have this also; but not as we, whose knowledge of sensible objects depends upon external mediums, and when stretch'd to its farthest extent, is bounded within very narrow limits. Both the manner and degree of his knowledge correspond to the perfection of his nature; pervading the whole universe, with all the parts of which he is as intimately present, as the soul is with its own ideas: he beholds all things by immediate intuition, without the help of such organs as are the channels of our knowledge: and this knowledge of his, is not more perfect in its kind, than in its degree. The knowledge

ledge or perception of *one* object is, in itself, no more impossible than any *other*, or the knowledge of *all* than the knowledge of any *one*, provided the subject be *capacious* enough to receive and lodge it. And such is the divine essence ; the immensity of which affords *room* for all the treasures of infinite knowledge. The *reason* of the existence of the several attributes being the *same*, must *operate equally* in all, that is, *infinitely* : for so I have proved it to have done in regard of *eternity* and *immensity*, and so therefore it must in respect of *knowledge*.

COROLLARY.

INFINITE wisdom is implied in infinite knowledge. Infinite knowledge is the knowledge of all things possible to be known ; infinite wisdom is the knowledge in all possible cases of what is best to be done. The being therefore which has all possible knowledge, must have *this* also, because it is possible. He who knows all the possible ways of action, and the fitnesses, relations, and consequences of every action ; cannot for certain need to be instructed which way is to be taken preferably to all others.

5. *A POWER* of doing all things which imply not a contradiction, or *OMNIPOTENCE*, is another glorious characteristic of the

the necessarily existent Being. What was just urged concerning omniscience; *mutatis mutandis*, may be applied here with equal evidence. To which I add farther, that the *material world*, because not of itself necessarily existent (by *Corol. of Prop. III.*) must have been *created* or produced out of nothing; and the *production out of nothing* of a *single particle* is *equivalent* to the production of *all things producible* by any power. For the power which *creates any single particle makes its own object*, i. e. operates without any *other* foundation in the thing than its *mere possibility*: where-ever therefore there is this possibility, creating power is sufficient to command the effect. As to the different degrees of possibility, they only take place in the operations of agents, who are not able to frame the matter of their workmanship; for the more or less apt this matter is to the purpose, the agent would make it serve; the difficulty of accomplishing his design is to such an agent proportionably greater or less. Now *nothing* is as *unapt* to the production of *one particle*, or *one world*, as of *ten thousand*; and therefore the *creation of ten thousand* is *alike possible*, and easy with the *creation of one*: and after God hath done the *greater*, he can do the *less*; after he hath *produced substances out of nothing*, he can give them the *motions and modifications* of which they are capable, and
which

which he thinks fit. This is all required to the effecting any of his purposes: for as to the *manner* in which things are to be done, and the *means* to be made use of; these are the province of infinite wisdom, which having mark'd out the way to his power, all that remains for that to do is, to impress certain beings after the manner which wisdom directs.

6. THE *necessarily-existent Being is possesst of the most perfect LIBERTY*. By liberty, I understand a *self-determining power*, in opposition to a *necessity* of acting, whencesoever that necessity arises. That the world, or the whole complex of finite beings, is not of itself necessarily existent, has been shown before (*Corol. of Prop. III.*) the consequence of which is, that it must be the production of a Being who does exist necessarily; and if from him, must be produced in the way of *necessity*, or of a *free voluntary effect*. It cannot be after the *former* manner, for this reason; that it would then have its original from the *same* necessity (for in the same being there cannot be two necessities) as is the *ground* of actual existence to the *first* cause, and consequently would not so properly be the effect of this first being, as of that necessity. Now the necessity of existence being the *same*, must exert itself every way *alike*; that is to say, in the existence, *if*
of

of *two* Beings, not of *one* infinite, simple and independent, which is the idea of God ; and the other finite, compounded and dependent, which is the true character of the world ; but of *two infinite*, absolutely simple, and independent Beings, *i.e.* of *two Gods*. The world therefore was a *free* production, and consequently God is a *free* agent. Or we may argue thus ; if the world was a necessary effect of the first cause, it was either as an *emanation* from his *substance*, or from his *mere power*. If from his *substance*, as this must have been by a *partition* of that substance, so the emanation would have been of exactly the *same* nature with the substance from which it came ; the *first* of which is *impossible*, and the *latter* contrary to fact. And upon the same account it could not have been from his *mere power* ; since the *effect* of a power *determined* by a *necessity* of nature must be of a nature *intirely conformable* to that wherein resides the necessity. There is therefore no other way remaining to account for the existence of the universe, but its production by the power of God under the *free* direction of his will. Observe, I do not say by the power of God with the *mere consent* of his will, for that would be mere power without any causality of his will ; but power *employ'd*, *determin'd*, and *guided* by will, which carries in it the idea

of the most perfect liberty: for as to the influence which the wisdom and goodness of God have in the determination of his will, 'tis purely *moral*, and he acts nevertheless *freely* for acting *wisely*. Besides we can conceive there is a vast *variety* of objects, methods, and circumstances of action *equally eligible*, in the choice of which consequently every one will perceive, that the supreme agent has the most absolute *freedom*: as whet her this world should be created, or another, at this time or another, of such an extent or a different, and the like.

7. 'Tis impossible the necessarily existent Being should be without every moral perfection in the greatest possible degree. Moral perfections are such as become a moral agent, in the want of which he would not be so perfect as in the possession; such as holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. The proof of these perfections may be compriz'd in a few words, being easily deducible from the idea of wisdom. Infinite wisdom, which has been demonstrated to be an attribute of the necessarily existent Being, cannot but direct and incline him to act after the *wisest*, that is, after the *best* manner possible; now certainly to act *in pursuance* of the most consummate justice and goodness, is a much better way of acting than *without* or *in opposition*

position to them. Should it be suggested, that as in man, at the same time that his reason advises to one course, his inclinations often hurry him to the contrary, it may be the same in God ; should, I say, this suggestion be offered, the contradiction of it to absolute necessity of existence, is apparent ; for absolute necessity is *one* and *uniform* ; the most perfect wisdom therefore, and an inclination to act contrary to that wisdom, cannot flow from the same necessity. Such an intestine *war* in the divine Being, would suppose *two* necessities, one of *good*, and the other of *evil* ; as the consequence of this would be the existence of *two beings* diametrically opposite one to the other. It remains therefore, that the necessarily existent Being be *infinitely wise*, and everlastingly *inclined* to do such things as are *correspondent* to the dictates of his own eternal wisdom. I need not add,

8. *That the necessarily existent Being is immutable and immortal.* If he exists necessarily in any one moment, he must necessarily exist throughout all possible duration : and if he necessarily exists *all that he is now*, he must exist the *same* for ever.

THE conclusion is, that the *necessarily existent Being* is a Being *infinitely perfect*.

P R O P. VI.

THERE is but one necessarily existent and infinitely perfect Being. Being may be consider'd as to perfection or number: under the former consideration, one infinitely perfect Being is commensurate to the whole possibility of being; since it may be pronounced at first sight, that there cannot be more perfection than is comprehended in the idea of infinite and all possible perfection. Let it be conceiv'd of two beings, that neither of them does, or can know any thing but what the other does, and will know too; there is really no more knowledge in nature for the existence of these two, than there would be if one of them were struck out of the supposition. There are, indeed, more knowing beings, but there is not more knowledge. And it would be the same as to power or presence, or any other attribute, if both together could do no more things, nor co-exist with more space, than either of them singly could do, and the like. Wherefore there can be but one infinitely perfect Being; forasmuch as one such Being contains all perfection, and so leaves no place for the possibility of more: unless this be thought so, that tho' one exhausts all perfection, it does not exhaust all number. But if this be a reason for supposing

sing more, having admitted the existence of more than one, you put it out of your power to deny the existence (I do not say of an infinite number of infinite beings; for however absurd this be, some may think an infinite number to be possible, but) of a number to which no addition can be made without a contradiction; and whether such a number of distinct and actually existent beings be not a palpable contradiction, I leave any discerning person to judge.





A N

A R G U M E N T

F O R T H E

Unity of GOD.

I COULD never doubt of the *unity*, any more than of the *existence* of God. That there is an eternal and most perfect being, and that there is but *one* such, were always to me propositions equally plain and undeniable : and yet I take permission to say, when I have proceeded to the particular examination of the several arguments brought to establish this great truth, they have not carried all that clearness and conviction with them, as might have been wished ; so that the intire acquiescence of my mind in the belief of the divine *unity*, (abstracting from revelation) seem'd to flow immediately from the idea of the *infinite Being*, not from any distinct reasoning upon that idea. That it is impossible there should be more than *one* infinite being, I am well enough satisfied ; but what it is that makes this impossible, I can better

better *conceive* than *express*: conceive, I say, not distinctly, but after a manner conformable to my idea of infinite, which is confused and obscure; tho' at the same time I am nevertheless certain of the existence of infinite, because of the indistinctness of my idea of it.

FROM hence taking occasion to consider the little proportion between our faculties and the arguments for the *unity* of God, fetch'd from his infinity, and necessary existence, (things so much above our reach!) I concluded they were too unweildy to be managed by a human understanding; I therefore turn'd my thoughts another way, and after a little search, found what I was in quest of.

THAT the argument is not so abstract and metaphysical as some the world hath of late years seen, will not be reckon'd a fault by those who have the same turn of mind that I have, who must acknowledge that in matters that concern the general belief of mankind, I never like an argument the better for being above common apprehensions. I shall advance to it by the following steps.

1. WE have *no reason* to believe or suppose there is *more than one God*.

2. WE have *very good reason* to believe there is *but one God*, who at first *created*, and still *preserves* and *governs this world*.

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3. WE

3. WE *do not want* reason firmly to believe, that there is *absolutely but one* God; or that besides the God that form'd this world, there is no other.

1. WE have *no reason* to believe or suppose there is *more than one* God. The existence and order of the universe forbid the ignorance and disbelief of *one* supreme and first cause, eternal and independent, to whom we are conducted by the chain of finite dependent causes. This first cause must be of *infinite power*; or it could not have been the fountain of being to other things; of *infinite wisdom*, because of the exquisite harmony and admirable contrivance, to be seen in the frame of the world; and of *infinite goodness*, forasmuch as he cannot be supposed to have created from a principle of indigence; and in regard the rest of the creation is manifestly designed to supply the needs, and subserve the happiness of the *reasonable* part. And having those perfections, and being infinite in them, the first cause must have, and be infinite in all others. So that the idea of *one* infinite Being is necessary; but the supposition of more than one is *needless*, and consequently *unreasonable*. 'Tis *needless*; *one* infinite power, and wisdom, and goodness *sufficing* to the formation and government of the whole world, and rendering all besides useless to those or any other purposes

purposes imaginable : for there is nothing could be done by two, three, or more Gods, if supposed to exist, which could not as well have been done by *one* only. *One* therefore is all that we have any need of, to account for all those wonderful instances of power, wisdom and goodness that are in the world. And because needless, the supposition is *unreasonable* ; if it be unreasonable to suppose any thing which we have no manner of reason to suppose.

2. WE have *very good reason* to believe, that no more than *one God* at first *made*, and consequently still *preserves* this world. For supposing (we will say) two ; either they concurred to the production of the whole world, or each took his part. The first is impossible, because the power of each being infinite ; if the powers of both were the joint original of existence to the world, they were both *total* causes ; for being infinite, either of them would have produced the effect, had the other been wanting. Between infinite and finite there is no medium : if therefore they be supposed to have exerted a less degree of power than infinite, it must have been finite ; and two finites conspiring together would not have been infinite, and therefore not adequate to the effect produced. But now the absurdity of two *total* causes in the *same kind*, and of the *same effect*, every
body

body will acknowledge. Neither is the supposition much more tolerable, that they divided the work between them. For why, when the almighty *fiat* of one would have given being to the whole system, and there was boundless space in which to erect what fabrics, and of what dimensions the other had a mind to, should they enter into a partnership in accomplishing the same design, as if they needed one another's assistance, and the concurrence of both would lessen the labour of each? Add to this a consideration, I think, of more weight than the former; that if *two* Gods were concern'd in the affairs of our world, notice would have been given of it, either by inscribing their names, as it were, on their several works, or by some other way, to the intent we might pay due honour and adoration to both: for worship and love belonging to God as our greatest friend and benefactor, if we suppose *two* such beings, it would be equally reasonable, that we should love and worship both. But this cannot be done, unless we first know them to exist. If therefore *two* such beings did exist, they would have discovered it to us; for that it is altogether fit they should be both worshipped. But we know not of more than *one*; there is therefore but *one* Almighty Maker of heaven and earth, from whom we have
received

received life, and breath, and all things ; and to whom the whole energy of our powers and faculties should be devoted.

3. *We do not want reason* firmly to believe that there is *absolutely but one God* ; or, that besides the God who form'd this world, there is no other. Were there another, they must be perfectly alike ; because otherwise one would have what the other had not ; and so one, or both, could not be possessed of infinite perfection, which destroys the idea of God. Well then, being perfectly alike, they are equally excellent, are equally worthy of veneration from all intelligent beings ; *Habet enim venerationem justam quicquid excellit*, saith *Velleius* the *Epicurean* in *Cicero* *. By veneration is meant an act of the understanding swallowed up in the contemplation of the divine excellencies, and adoring the unfathomable depth. Now, tho' *Epicurus* had no great reason to challenge veneration for the Gods, as he represented them, shut up within the walls of heaven, without knowing or caring to know the concerns of this lower world, the oversight of which would be a disturbance to their happiness ; (for I don't see what very magnificent thoughts can be formed of such local, selfish, lazy gods as these) yet certainly, supposing two, or more Gods superlatively excellent,
know-

* De Nat. Deor. lib. i.

knowing all things, tho' not concerned in the production and conservation of all, because the care of more than one about the same things is unnecessary; veneration, on this supposition, would belong to all, and to all equally. Moreover, being infinitely excellent, and perfectly alike, whatever their number were, they must perfectly love one another. For the same reason that each loves himself, because excellent, he must love all the rest; and loving himself infinitely, because infinitely lovely, must love the rest to the same height, because shining in the same perfections, and with the same degree of lustre. From all this follows, that neither of them will be wanting to advance and propagate the glory of the rest, engaged hereto by the fitness of the thing, and not restrained by envy; which, as it can find no room in a perfect nature, so would be inconsistent with that intense affection in which they must be united one to another: insomuch that tho' the Creator of this world be but *one*, he would, if there were such, bring us acquainted with the other Gods his friends; that as they are united among themselves, all reasonable beings, whatever world they inhabited, might unite in their adorations of them: tho', in respect of gratitude, we should be only indebted to our Maker, and he only would have

have a right to punish us upon failure of love and service to him, or veneration of the rest. But now, hath our Creator given us so much as a hint of any other God besides himself? doth nature lead us to the belief of more Gods than *one*? quite the contrary. The mind recoils at the proposal of them; but rests pleas'd and easy in the notion of *one*: nay, so great is the satisfaction which the mind perceives in the idea of only *one* God, and the aversion it hath to the supposition of *more*, that the *unity* of God seems a sort of prolepsis or anticipation interwoven in the frame of our being.

THE *polytheism* of the *heathen* is no objection to this. The same *sound* is indeed common to us with them, but a very different *idea* conveyed by it. A *heathen* God was a being superior to man, but finite and imperfect: with us, the word signifies a Being possess'd of all possible perfections: and I will venture to say, in this sense of the word, there never was such a thing as *polytheism* in the world.

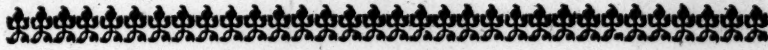
NOTHING more certain than that a self-sufficient nature cannot receive any advantage from the worship of men or angels.

Ipsa suis pollens opibus nihil indiga nostri.

The acclamations of ten thousand worlds would be but a feint broken echo to the approbation

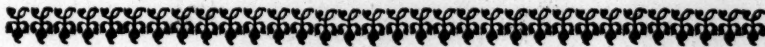
probation of his own eternal mind. But neither doth this take from the force of the argument, which turns not upon any pleasure which the Deity is supposed to have in the praises of inferior beings, as if he coveted their applause, and was regaled with this kind of incense, as the heathens imagined their Gods to be with the steams of a sacrifice; but upon the justice of the thing, and the essential regard of a wise and holy nature, to that which is just and becoming. Because of the immense fulness of his Being, we are kept from thinking that God can be made happier by the honours we pay him; but because of this plenitude of perfection and blessedness, the more reason have we to honour him. That he doth not need our adoration is the very ground upon which it becomes due.





O F
REASON,
As it relates to
MORALITY.

*Nihil potest esse æquabile quod non a certa
ratione proficiscatur.* Cicer.



OF
R. H. A. S. O. N.
AND
MORALITY.



O F

R E A S O N.

§ 1. **B**Y *reason* is universally understood that faculty of intelligent beings which enables them to judge of the truth or falshood of propositions. Now these propositions being of two sorts; from hence ariseth a distinction of *reason* into *speculative* and *practical*; the latter of which hath regard either to the happiness of the being, and is called *PRUDENCE*, or to his moral conduct and behaviour, and is then best express'd by the word *CONSCIENCE*. The present enquiry concerns *practical reason*, and that chiefly as respecting things of a moral nature. That it is best to act after this or that manner, in the general course of life, or in some particular occurrence, and that it is not best so to act (taking the term *best* in the same sense, whatever that sense be) are contradictory propositions; and being so, *reason* will not only inform us, that they cannot both of them be true; but, if we will allow ourselves the trouble

ble of a free and narrow examination, will satisfy us which is true, and which is false.

§ 2. THERE may, perhaps, be some ground for distinguishing between *reason* and *reasoning*. The knowledge of the truth of propositions, whether self-evident, or evident only by the mediation of others, whether at one view, or at several, may, in a larger sense, be stil'd *reason*. *Reasoning* is the mind's gradual progress from one knowledge to another; or, in a chain of propositions, it is inferring the truth of the consequent from its connexion with the antecedent, till it arrives to the first link in the chain, which needs no proof. We shall not dishonour God by attributing *reason* to him in its most exalted notion; as, 'tis manifest we should, if we supposed him to have any occasion for *reasoning*. He hath the ideas of all things in his own mind; and with one all-comprehending view beholds the infinite relations which they bear to one another; so that he at once possesses all possible knowledge. There is therefore in this case no room for *reasoning*, which always argues imperfection; and yet there is what answers to *reasoning* in finite understandings, and differs from it no otherwise, than as *one perfect* act does from *several imperfect* ones in the same kind. God sees how one truth follows

follows from another, and how the remotest ideas may be shewn to agree by the intervention of a great number of others; but then he sees at *once* what angelical and human minds perceive not but *successively*, and infinitely more than they will perceive after the longest exercise of their reasoning faculty. Provided then we only remove these two degrading qualities of the knowledge of creatures, that it hath *bounds*, and that it is *progressive*, we need not scruple to discourse of the knowledge of God under the name and character of *eternal reason*.

§ 3. REASON, as conversant about practical matters, hath the double office assigned it of a *guardian to the body*, and the *guide of moral life*. As a *guardian to the body*^a, *reason* supplies the place of those weapons which nature hath furnished other creatures withal for their defence. These it hath diversely arm'd, giving horns to one, hoofs to another, swiftness to another, fierceness and strength to another, together with a consciousness wherein the excellency of each kind lies, and how to apply and manage it: to *man* she hath given wisdom, which is more than equivalent to all the advantages of his fellow-creatures, whether for conquest, resistance, or flight. In the same capacity,

D 2

reason

^a Anacr. Ode II. Xenoph. Cyri Inst. lib. ii. cap. 3.
Hor. lib. ii. sat. 1.

reason is to man what those *instincts* are to other creatures by which they are taught the methods of self-preservation, both as to the individual and the species. From whence there is this useful instruction to be drawn, that in every thing, even in the most common instances, and where *instinct* serves the brute, man is to employ his *reason*; for it is with this view that wise and provident nature hath put him under a necessity of doing this with regard to the body itself, or of being miserable. All other creatures but man have no need of any other dress, whether for beauty or convenience, than that which covers them without any care of their own; they want not any lessons, how to build their habitations, or to chuse and get the food most proper for them: whereas, setting aside the several arts and professions of life, which owe their invention and progress to *reason*, man is the most helpless and unprovided of all animals. His *necessities* first made him turn his thoughts to *tillage*, *architecture*, *navigation*, and a thousand other things, for which he had never else known himself to have a genius and capacity. For the definition of *instinct*, what it is, and wherein founded, we must apply ourselves to the natural philosopher. "Whether it
" be a strong^b, and immutable fancy of
" certain

^b Dr. Grew, in his *Cosmologia*.

“ certain things, and of the actions belonging to them, or something else, we know not what ;” it is undeniably plain, from experience, that there are these two remarkable differences between *instinct* and *reason*, that *reason* is *improvable*, *instinct* not ; *instinct* is a *blind determination*, *reason* proceeds upon *choice* and *foresight*. The actions that flow from *instinct*, are performed with the same exactness at first as after never so many trials ; as those of bees and birds, in the structure of their combs and nests. In the actions that are under the direction of *reason*, 'tis otherwise ; the theory of which costs a great deal of time to master, and the practice much more. Art is indebted to experience ; not so nature. Nor can this diversity in their operations be thought strange, when, in one case, the *supreme reason* is master, in the other, *human* only. *Instinct* in creatures not endowed with a higher principle, is as undesigning as *chance*, tho' more certain ; such creatures reach their end without knowing or intending it : he that fixed their respective ends, having so framed their natures as constantly to determine them to the infallible means by which these ends are attained. Man, on the contrary, being capable of weighing both ends and means, is to use his *reason* in the choice of both. And, by the way, this necessity

of calling in the assistance of *reason*, in what concerns the body, to supply the want of other advantages which are found in creatures below us, is not only an argument that our Creator intended and expects we should employ our *reason* about these things, but much more that we should exercise this faculty in matters of greater moment ; since for the acquisition of a happiness like that of the beasts, *instinct* without *reason*, would have done our business as well as theirs : and therefore, had we not been ordained to some nobler end, to the accomplishing of which, *reason* is necessary, *reason* would have been a useless gift ; and because useless, would not have been bestowed by a wise God. If it be thought a disadvantage on the side of mankind, that brutes are born with *instinct*, while man comes not to any use, and much less to any ripeness of *reason*, till after some years, and but by slow degrees ; instead of arguing from hence, as some have done, for the *mortality*^c of the *soul*, it is not only more pious, but more natural, and reasonable, to remark the *wisdom* of *providence* in this constitution ; which having designed men for the intercourses of society, and for a closer, more agreeable, and more lasting union than takes place among the inferior tribes of animals,
hath

^c Lucret. lib. iii.

hath so contrived matters, that man requires the care and inspection of others during a much longer time than they do ; by which means there is more friendship and benevolence on all sides ; the bond, which hath taken up so much time in twisting, is the stronger ; there is room for the exercise of several duties between parents and children, the elder and the younger ; and men are trained up to that subjection and dependence which a social state makes necessary.

§ 4. THE other and more excellent office of *reason* is to be the *guide of moral life*.

^d *That we may not at any time act precipitantly, negligently, and at random ; being formed by nature for greater and more important things.*

Had man (to resume the argument just now touch'd upon) been designed for nothing more than the dumb creation, for none but an animal life, like them ; or a life but little superior to theirs ; like them, he would have been supplied with mechanical force and *instincts*, and ignorant of *reason* ; which, on this supposition, would have been idly thrown away, and have proved not so much a privilege as a burden : as, in fact, it is to the voluptuary, and the miser ; whom, by perpetually reproaching them with the meanness of their pursuits, it robs of the satisfaction and pleasure they hope for in them.

D 4

§ 5. IN

Cicer. de Off. lib. i. § 29.

§ 5. IN discharging this part, *reason* is principally concerned about two things; fixing right principles, and forming just deductions from principles thus fixed. For the settling its principles, *reason* either consults its *own* light, or the light of *revelation*; for the truth of the revelation being once well established, whatever that revelation dictates hath the same authority, and proves as firm a foundation, in our reasonings, as the first principles of nature. It is a strange fancy of an ingenious author*, in which, I believe, he is by himself; “That it is impossible, “in any case, by any reasoning whatever, “to draw distinct revealed consequences, “or conclusions, from revealed principles.” This notion is, I take it, as groundless as it is new. That a *proposition* is a true consequence from another, and that the consequence is a true proposition, are very different things; the not distinguishing betwixt which is, perhaps, the ground of this author’s mistakes in his manner of arguing. Any principle (however we come to the knowledge of it, whether by *reason* or *revelation*) may have consequences deduced from it. If it be a principle of revelation, the consequence, as a true consequence, owes its evidence to *reason*; as a true proposition to the testimony which supports

* Morgan’s *Grounds and Principles of Christian Communion*.

supports the principle it flows from. *Ubi eadem ratio, idem jus*, is a maxim in law, which depends not on the bare interpretation of the words of the law, but on just consequences from it. The *mosaic* law expressly forbids the marriage of a grandfather with his grand-daughter, or of a niece with her uncle on the father's side, and no more; and yet few will doubt the grandson's marrying his grandmother, and the niece her maternal uncle, to be consequently forbidden; on this account, that the cases are parallel. It is a great mistake of this gentleman to say, that our Saviour in his argument against the *Sadducees*, urges them with an express scripture-testimony for supposing the *separate existence of the souls* of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob* to be as he affirms, comprehended in the direct meaning of the words, *I am the God of Abraham, &c.* Yet surely the *resurrection of the body*, in proof of which this passage is cited from the writings of *Moses*, is not to be made appear from them, otherwise than in the way of consequence: as thus; from God's styling himself the *God* of these holy patriarchs, it was reasonable to infer, that they were very much in his favour, and would be gloriously rewarded by him; from whence they might farther conclude, that God being compleatly reconciled to them, all the effects
of

of sin would finally be abolish'd, and death among others ; so that the time would come when their bodies should be restored to life again ; since their being depriv'd of it was the effect of God's displeasure for the sin of the first man. Should God leave the souls of good men for ever in hell, or in the state of separate spirits, it would look as if he were not perfectly reconciled to them, and intended not to make them perfectly happy ; which yet he gives them *reason* to hope he will do, in taking to himself the title of *their God*. To return from this digression. The principles discoverable by the light of *reason* are called, *natural principles*, *common notions innate* * to the mind, *anticipations*. These two last names have been given them, to signify that they were in the mind *ab origine*, not instill'd by education, nor obtain'd by *reasoning*, but the immediate gift of the Creator. Be this opinion true or false, it is of no importance to morality ; the principles of which have the very same degree of authority, by whatever way they are derived into the mind, whether by immediate implantation, or the right use of that *reason* which the human soul is endow'd with. Are these principles innate ? be it so ; yet it is not as innate, that we know them to be true principles, and not vulgar

* Ἀρχαὶ φυσικαὶ, πρῶτα τῆς φύσεως, κοινὰ ἔννοιαι, ἀπὸ λήψεως.

vulgar errors ; but by the evidence of *reason*. Are they in no proper sense innate? the anti-moralist gains nothing by this, since they can be shewn to result from *right reason*, which being one uniform and immutable thing, as will presently be prov'd, and a light set up by God himself, is to be treated with the same respect as would be due to the truth if stamp'd upon the soul in its creation, and by God's immediate hand. The same proposition may be both a *principle* and a *deduction*; a *principle* with respect to those moral rules that are built upon it; and a *deduction* from some prior principles, which are of a greater extent than itself. Those that have none prior to them, at least not in the same science, are styl'd general and first principles. It is an undoubted truth, confirm'd by universal experience, that there is greater danger of mens taking up with wrong principles, than of arguing wrong from the principles assum'd; and vastly more miscarry by the former way, than in the latter. Antiquity, education, numbers, authority, learning, are not principles to be relied on, and yet what more manifest than that these are the principles by which whole nations are governed in the weightiest affair of human life? For, at the bottom, the greater part of mankind have little more to say for their being of the religion and way they profess, rather than any other, than that it was

was the religion of their *fathers*; and is so still of the *country* where they live, and of the *government* they live under; they know learned men that are of it, and it hath a great number of followers. It is to no purpose to go about to expose the folly of their proceeding after this manner: they have neither patience to hear you, nor openness of mind to be convinc'd by any thing you can offer; having laid it down for a *first principle*, never to dispute what hath long pass'd under that *sacred name*.

§ 6. BUT to what purpose are we refer'd to *right reason*, and so many fine things said in its praise, when the admirers of *reason* are in much the same condition with those that extol *infallibility*? Sure they are, that it is a very good thing, and a certain mark of the true church; but they know not where it is lodg'd; there is need of another guide to find out the infallible one. No, man can have any thing to say against *right reason*, could it be discover'd; all the controversy is, who have it in their keeping, and how it may be ascertain'd. *Right reason* is not the *reason* of the *community*, "which, saith *Hobbs*,"* "among all the members of "that community is to pass for right;" for then a community could never act wrong; its being done by the community making the thing to be right, whatever was the *reason* for

* De Cive, Cap. 2. § 1.

for doing it, or even if there was none. Nor is it every man's *own reason*, which, according to the same author, is, *extra civitatem*, the only rule, by recourse to which he can judge betwixt *right reason* and *false*: since, upon this foot, a man in the state of nature could no more do a *foolish* than an *unjust* thing; could no more have any ground to reproach *himself*, than deserve the reproaches of *others*; unless you suppose he may go *wrong*, by following that which is *right*, and *reason* and *folly* may be the same thing. One way there is to avoid these contradictions, and to fix a meaning to the term, which else will be always fluctuating; and that is by placing *right reason* in the conformity of the judging faculty to the *nature of things*. Here we have a common standard, absolutely independent of blind and arbitrary will, and therefore unalterable, whether by the opinions of private persons, or the decrees of whole societies. *Hobbs* himself adds, * "that a man's *reason*, to be "*right*, must be *true*;" and where, I pray, lies the difference betwixt *right* and *true*? or how shall a man know his *reason* to be true? certainly, not by comparing it with itself, but with something else. The nature of *things* differs not from the nature of *free intelligent Beings*, as that nature stands for the intire sum of their *powers*,
capa-

* Ibid.

capacities, and *inclinations*, together with their *relation* to other beings, especially of the same *kind*; and above all to the supreme and self-existent Being, the fountain of all others. Things and actions, according to their different natures, have different effects upon perceptive beings, by reason of which they challenge from these beings, if they would act reasonably, a different regard. He that should use fire and water, food and poison, for the same purposes, or after the same manner, would from his own experience be soon convinced of their opposite qualities, and from thence of his rashness and folly: it is the same in *moral matters*, as to which, whoever acts without any rule, or by a wrong one (from humour, caprice, fancy, passion, example, and not from observation of the natures and consequences of things, what relation he bears to the system, and how he may be effected by, or affect, the neighbouring or remoter parts of it; whoever, I say, acts thus,) is sure to pay dear for his mistake, or inattention. Learn therefore, as the moral poet advises:

* *Quid sumus, et quid nam victuri gignimur* --
And again,

----- *quem te Deus esse*
Jussit, & humana qua parte locatus es in re.

I T

* Perf. Sat. 3.

IT may not be improper to observe, that *reason* being regulated by the nature and order of things, it hath come to pass that the *nature of things* and *right reason* have been taken in common use for equivalent terms : as when it is said, that such a judgment or action is conformable to *right reason* ; by *right reason* must be understood the eternal nature, and immutable order of things. From this principle, *viz.* that *right reason* consists in a conformity of the judgments of the mind to the *nature of things*, arise these following Corollaries.

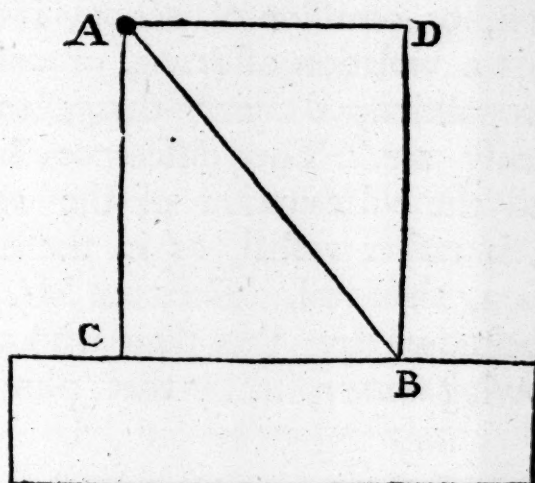
§ 7. I. *RIGHT reason* is the same in all ; being measured by one and the same rule, the *natures* and *relations* of things. Let the difference of species be what it will, or the diversity of genius's and complexions in the individuals, *reason* is for kind the same in all reflecting beings, in angelical and human minds ; is of no age, or nation, or language, but alike understood in and by all that consult her, and listen to her voice. 'Tis impossible that *right reason* should to an *European* dictate one thing, and to an *American* another ; or that it should contradict itself, by telling one man such a thing is right, and another that it is wrong.

§ 8. II. A MAN'S actions, throughout the whole course of his life, ought to be uniform, and consonant. Whoever acts inconsistently and inconsistently, cannot act agreeably

agreeably to *right reason* ; because the nature of things remaining unchangeable, when the same case occurs, *reason* will always pronounce alike concerning it, without any the least respect to a change of humour, or of the persons. Whether the party affected be my self, or some other ; and whether I am dispos'd after the same or a different manner ; which *reason* can no more alter than the *nature of things*, must suggest one invariable conduct in all parallel circumstances. Should a judge frequently give contrary decisions, where the cases were apparently the same, it would be visible to every one that the *law* was not the rule he went by. And what does that man do better, whose *moral conduct* is full of contradictions ? let him not set up for a *reasonable* behaviour : nothing can be more repugnant to *reason*, which is every whit as stubborn and inflexible as the constitution of nature. These two deductions fall in with Dr. Cumberland's. To which I add,

§ 9. III. THIS principle supplies us with an infallible criterion of *moral good* and *evil*, viz. the agreement or disagreement of the *subject* of either, or that to which we attribute these qualities, with the *nature* of things ; which agreement or disagreement is to be discover'd and determin'd by *reason*. Now the proper immediate subject of *moral good* and *evil*, is not the outward action, or a bare perception of the mind, which,

taken apart, have no more morality in them, than the flowing of a river, which sometimes keeps within its channel, at other times overflows its banks ; or the images reflected from a looking-glass, which may be true or false, resembling the original object, or unlike it. Moral good and evil are compatible to the *will* only, consider'd in its state of liberty. Regular volitions are morally good, irregular ones morally evil ; and this regularity, or irregularity, lies in the consent of the *will* with the *nature* of things, or opposition to it. The more strong and intire this consent or opposition is in any particular act, or in the fixed or general bent of the *will*, the greater degree hath that act or habit of moral good or evil, of virtue or vice. It may not be displeasing to some to see this represented, or illustrated rather, by the following diagram.



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A,

A, any body, impinges upon *B*, [some solid obstacle. Let the motion of *A* be express'd by *AB*, and resolv'd into two other motions, viz. *AD*, and *AC*; of which *AC* only is oppos'd to *B*. The force with which *A* strikes against *B* to its absolute force, or its action, supposing it to have been in the perpendicular, is as the line *AC* to the line *AB*. Let *A* then stand for the *will*, and *B* for the *nature* of things; the absolute force of the *will* exerted in two evil actions may be the same; but if in the one the opposition to the settled order of things be full and direct, in the other not; in the one it will be greater, in the other less; and where the opposition is greatest, the quantity of *moral evil* will be the same. This criterion differs not in effect from that of a late ingenious author,* who having substituted *truth* instead of the *nature* of things, resolves the evil of an action, or omission of action, into this, that it is a violation of *truth*, or contains a false proposition, denying things to be as they truly are. The difference between this and the old criterion of the *nature* of things, is rather verbal, or in the mode of expression, than real. Does not Mr. *Woolaston* † acknowledge, that they who place all in following *nature*, if by that phrase they mean

* *Woolaston's Religion of Nature delineated.*

† *Ibid.* p. 22, 25.

mean acting according to the *nature* of things, (*i. e.* treating things as being what they in *nature* are, or according to *truth*) say what is right? By *truth* then he means the *truth* of things; and by affirming, or denying the *truth*, the conformity of mens acts to the *truth* of the case, (*i. e.* the *truth*, or *nature* of things) or the contrary. Whereupon I would ask, what there is new in this notion? and cannot but wonder how one of this gentleman's sagacity, and large reading, could say that what he hath advanced concerning the *nature* of moral good and evil, he had never met with any where. What! had he never met with any writers that speak of the *nature* of things, as the standard of good and evil? or does every variation in the phrase make a new system? By the *nature* of good and evil, and the *formal ratio* of them, did he intend to convey the same idea, or did he not? If he did, then, as the *formal ratio*, so the *nature* of good and evil, must consist in the conformity of mens acts to the *truth* of the case, or the *nature* of things; which he could not but know is the common way of stating this matter, and therefore cannot be accounted new. If the *nature* of moral good and evil, and their *formal ratio*, have not the same signification, I would gladly be informed what is the *difference* between them. For ought I see

E 2

then,

then, all that is peculiar to Mr. *Woolaston's* system is this ; that what others would call a conformity, or disconformity of mens actions to the *truth* of things, and he himself is content to call so in one place, he loves generally to express, by mens affirming, or denying, things to be as they really are. And what does he gain by putting the old notion into this metaphorical dress?

§ 10. I HAVE these two things to offer against it. 1. The thing he takes for granted will not be allowed him, and doth not hold in a proper sense ; I mean, that every evil action is a denial of some true proposition. *A.* for want of inclination, not of ability, refuses to relieve *B.* an undoubted object of charity. By this action, or rather omission, he does, according to Mr. *Woolaston* assert the wretch not to be an object of charity, or that his condition is not what he knows it to be. Not at all ; if this omission does not necessarily, or probably carry any signification. And that it does not, is plain, since the immediate and only proper signification of such a criminal neglect, or omission (the case being supposed plain) is, that the man, thro' the prevalency of corrupt affections, hath no regard to what he knows to be his duty. This is what his behaviour, in overlooking a miserable object, proclaims ; and this is really the truth of the matter.

Nothing

Nothing being more common than for men knowingly to act or forbear acting contrary to their duty ; their so acting, or forbearing to act, is not, strictly speaking, a false sign, or a sign not agreeing with the true state of things ; all it signifies is, that men have no regard to the state and nature of things ; which is very true. To be vitious, therefore, is not to deny a true proposition to be true ; but, notwithstanding the truth of it, to contemn and disregard it, *i. e.* to counter-act the *nature* of things. I freely own, a true proposition may be denied, or things may be denied to be what they are, by deeds, as well as express words, or another proposition. But then I add, the crime of such denials does not turn upon their inconsistency with things, but with what we believe them to be. And sinful actions have, I take it, no such meaning. Besides which, it deserves to be consider'd, that as the guilt of a common lie does not result from the mere use of a false sign, but of a sign which we have or conceive to be false, according to its ordinary import ; so, in case ill actions should signify what they are here represented to do, yet not being done with any such view or reflection, they have no guilt as false propositions, but as actions that violate and contradict their rule. 2. Keeping to this metaphor, we shall have a cri-

terion^s for the kind of our actions, whether good, evil, or indifferent; not for the degree in each respective kind. The author of the *Religion of Nature*^h was aware of this; and accordingly observes, that truths may contain matters of different importance, and that the degrees of guilt vary with the importance of things. So that here is one criterion for the general quality of actions, which is *truth*; and another for the degrees of each quality, the *importance* of things. Whereas the criterion before-mentioned, taken from the conformity or opposition of the *will* to the nature of things, will at once serve both purposes. For what he says of the different degrees from the number of truths violated, tho' very ingenious and subtle, it will not, I doubt, exactly answer in the calculation; and, at best, is not easily apprehended by common readers; which is reason enough against it, when a plainer test may be had.

§ II. IV. RIGHT *reason* is entirely consistent and harmonious with divine revelation, and supernatural assistances; and we may have a high value for the one without renouncing the other: nay more, cannot have a just notion, and make the proper use of either, but we must be thankful to the common fountain and donor of both. Ob-
jects

^s Rel. of Nat. pag. 8.

^h Pag. 21, 31.

jects too remote, or too small for the naked eye, are render'd distinctly visible by the help of glasses. A resistance that exceeds the natural force of the muscles, may be easily overcome by the application of machines contrived for this purpose. In this case, should a man stand upon the credit of his eyes, or sinews, so far as to pretend he sees what he does not see, or to pretend to do what he is not able to perform, rather than he will condescend to supply the deficiency of nature by the inventions of art; his conceited proceeding would plainly contradict *reason*, and the *nature* of things: I say, the *nature* of things, which will not admit of our seeing some objects, and performing some operations without foreign aid. Thus it is in *physics*, and not very different in matters of a *moral* kind. There are heights of divine knowledge and virtue to which human nature, unassisted, cannot reach; revelation kindly offers to be our guide, and to raise and fortify our feeble powers by the succours of grace. Is not he a fool now, and wretchedly opiniative, that, trusting to the sufficiency of his own faculties, scornfully rejects the illumination and assistance he may have from heaven? does he not discover a most stupid ignorance of his own nature, its weakness and imperfections, and of the nature of spiritual objects, and spi-

ritual attainments ; the sublimity of the one, and the difficulty of the other ? Why must the *animal* part of human nature have its limits, and very narrow ones too, and the *rational* and *moral* part have none ? why must this latter be equal to all the objects belonging to it, when the former is not ? 'Tis more likely that there is somewhat of analogy and proportion between them, and the weakness of the body, and its senses is but too apt a representation of the infirmities of the mind. And if this be a fault on one hand, 'tis likewise an error on the other, to discard the use of *reason* in religion, and inveigh against human nature out of respect to revelation and the grace of God. 'Tis not more certain that the eye could do little, in some cases, without a telescope, than that the telescope can be of no use without the eye ; and our calling in the mechanism of art to improve that of nature, is a concession that nature is the foundation of art, which only finishes what the other begins. Thus revelation is a kind of supplement to *reason*, and *grace* to nature ; the gospel brings new light, and new enforcements of strength ; but the old faculties are still employ'd, and divine assistance to be expected upon no other terms but our making the best use of these. The oeconomy (if I may so call it) observed by the author of our religion, in the miracles he

he wrought, performing none but upon the juſteſt occaſions, and then leaving natural means to go as far as they would, tho' that was but a little way, may ſerve for a hint of the method fitteſt to be purſued in the diſpenſing of *grace*. Let the miracle of the loaves be rightly conſidered, and it will give ſome light into this point. What were five loaves and two fiſhes to ſerve the wants of ſuch a multitude? yet, inconfiderable as they were, our Saviour makes uſe of them, and ſupplies, by miracle, what was wanting, which was by far the greater part. From this wiſe, and (if it would not be thought too bold an expreſſion, I would ſay) frugal management of our Saviour's wonder-working power, beſides the argument which it affords in favour of chriſtianity, I would only obſerve how agreeable it is to the methods of providence, as well as correſponding with our natural notions of the Deity, for God not to exert his extraordinary power at any time, to ſupercede the neceſſity of our doing the little we can; which would be only an encouragement to our lazineſs, but to render that power the more conſpicuous in our weakneſs; I mean, in the ſucceſs of the feebleſt means and attempts under a divine direction and co-operation.

§ 12. V. EVERY rational being ought to govern himſelf by *reaſon*. Nothing can be plainer

plainer than that we ought to act according to the *nature* of things, and the *order* established in the universe : and this being plain, 'tis no less evident that we ought to act according to *reason* ; since *right reason* denotes the agreement of our judgments with the *reason* or nature of things. And if so, we are not left to follow inclination, or imagination. Neither of these is to be our guide.

§ 13. THE *Stoics* ⁱ reckoned three parts belonging to the human *compositum* ; body, soul, and mind. To the body, they ascribe senses ; to the soul, appetites or inclinations ; to the mind, the decrees by which the man ought to be determin'd and sway'd in all his actions. Without entering into the philosophy of this distinction, I may venture to say, they were certainly in the right to put inclination under the controul of *reason*. *Inclination ought never to be made the immediate rule of action* : of which moral axiom, the meaning is this, that in order to be ascertain'd of the nature and expediency of actions, it is not enough to consult our inclinations ; nor from the bent of these can we justly infer the allowableness of taking the course our inclinations prompt us to. This compendious method may indeed be granted to some other creatures. Beasts, which cannot sin, have nothing to do but follow the impulse

ⁱ Antonin. lib. iii. § 16.

pulse of *nature*; and, perhaps, angels, who never did sin, are in no danger by doing the same. But 'tis otherwise with man, whose *nature* is extremely vitiated and depraved. Besides, that it is not with man as it is with angels and beasts, who have each of them but a single *nature*; whereas man hath, as it were, two *natures*, an animal and a rational, a carnal and a spiritual part; in one of which he agrees with the beasts, in the other with the angels. And when man is made up of two parts, can it be reasonable that the appetites and inclinations of the ignobler part should prescribe to the other, which hath vastly the preheminance, both in respect of faculties and duration? We ought, on the contrary, to reflect, that these inclinations were design'd to be the matter of our trial, not the measure of our actions; to be governed, not to be indulged. The *heathen*^k were better acquainted with the dignity of human nature, than to suppose that the body was the man, or that reason was to march in the train of inclination. The *force* of the soul is divided into two parts; " one
 " consisting in *appetite*, the *ὄρεσις*, of the
 " *Greeks*, which hurries a man this way
 " and that; the other in *reason*, which
 " teaches and explains what is to be done,
 " and what to be avoided of these two:

" *reason*

^k Cicer. de Offic. lib. i. § 28.

“ *reason* is to preside, and *appetite* to obey.” Let it not be pretended, either that our *inclinations* being natural, it was not the intention of our Maker, that we should restrain them, or that they are so head-strong and violent, that it is not in our power to do it. If our *inclinations* are natural, our *reason* is so much more ; and therefore as often as *inclination* and *reason* clash, as they do whenever *inclination* tempts us to break rank, and spoil that comely array in which nature hath drawn up her various hosts, we ought to quit *inclination*, and adhere to *reason*. It would be a contradiction to say, that *reason* advised us to forsake the conduct of *reason*. Were there no more in it than this, that *inclination* is but an inferior part of our nature ; this alone would prove that *inclination* ought not to rule, but to be ruled : but there is this farther to be consider’d, that *inclination* is only a temporary and an accidental part of our nature, not essential. We should be the same creatures we are now (only more perfect in our kind) were we without these *inclinations* ; as ’tis certain good men shall be after the resurrection ; but now without *reason* we could not be men : take away *reason*, you destroy human nature ; take away *inclination*, as signifying a blind *impetus* to sensual enjoyments, and you improve it. Consequently,

’tis

'tis as evident as any first principle, that tho' our appetites are to be gratified in some degree, for the sake of this low animal life, of which we are to seek the preservation till God advance us to a better ; yet they are not to run riot, and trample upon all laws, divine and human. Such a liberty as this can never be agreeable to our nature, or to the design of its author. I confess, were it true, as it is pleaded by some, that we could not govern our *inclinations*, it would not be our duty to govern them, nor would *reason* enjoin it ; since God can never require impossibilities, nor *reason* be on the side opposite to *necessity*. But this is far from being true ; and we reproach our Maker, when we suppose him to have given us blind and brutish appetites, which he hath given us no power, either natural or supernatural, to bridle and manage. *Reason* and *resolution* can do much, and *grace* more.

§ 14. THERE is a sort of *inclinations* of a middle kind, between the merely animal and purely rational ; by which the characters of men are diversified, and they are led into different paths of life. Now tho' we are not to give the reins absolutely to these *inclinations* ; yet, after *reason* hath past sentence concerning a particular action, or course of action, *inclination* deserves to be attended to, and in concurrence with *reason*
is

is frequently necessary to direct after what manner we are to perform an action, or shape the course of our lives. Applying to this purpose, the excellent words of the great *Roman* orator and moralist; ¹ “ That every
 “ man ought to pursue his proper bent, provided it be not vicious; that he may the
 “ more easily fall into that decorum, which
 “ is the beauty of human life.” Not that we are at liberty to oppose universal nature; but, this being preserved inviolate, every one is to be led by his own peculiar genius: so that, notwithstanding other methods of life, may, in themselves, be more eligible; yet we are to measure our own conduct by what is proper and distinguishing in our nature. ’Tis heartless to attempt things in spite of nature, and to follow what cannot be overtaken.

Nilil decet invita, ut aiunt, Minerva.

Again, ^m we are to take notice, that *nature* hath, as it were, invested us with two persons; of which one is common, by means of our partaking of *reason*; (this is the universal nature before-mentioned) the other, is descriptive of the individual - - - ⁿ Now if there be any such thing as *decorum*, it is to be found in uniformity, both in regard of the general scheme of life, and particular actions;

¹ De Off. lib. i. § 31.

^m § 30.

ⁿ § 31.

actions ; which 'tis impossible you should maintain, if neglecting your own nature, you imitate that of other men. By our *proper nature* Cicero understands not only what we express by the word inclination, but every thing that enters into a man's separate character ; and upon this difference of *nature* he lays so much stress as to say that one man hath not only a right, but is under a kind of obligation to kill himself, while the same action is forbidden to another ; for an instance of which he mentions ° *Cato*, who having receiv'd from *nature* an incredible severity of temper, which he had improv'd by a tenacious adherence to the resolutions he at any time had form'd, was concern'd, as he would be *Cato* still, to die by his own hands, rather than owe his life as a gift to *Cæsar*, or even to see the face of that tyrant. This, certainly, is a wrong application of a rule in the general very good.

§ 15. *Imagination* hath no better claim to the government, than *appetite and inclination* ; and yet what more common than for imagination to be substituted in the room of *reason*? it is so in general, by the *witty*, the *melancholy*, and the *gay* part of the world ; with whom a lively simile passes for a convincing argument, an empty spectre for a substantial being, and bright-
ness

ness of colouring, instead of justness of proportion and elegance of design. This proneness to mistake imagination for *reason*, is in none more remarkable than in the enthusiasts; to whom I take leave to add the noble author of a *Letter concerning Enthusiasm*. *Enthusiasm* is that particular species of mechanism, which disposes men to imagine the objects of religion so strongly, as almost to force their belief of some foreign and extraordinary cause, and consequently of things being in reality just as they imagined them. The brain of the *Enthusiast* is shook with the same violence, as that of persons in dreams, or frenzies and deliriums, and leaves him but little more use of his *reason*. Such a one is subject to unaccountable impulses, which he takes for certain indications of his intercourse with superiour beings. Persuasion is absurdly made the *reason* of persuasion, and his faith resolv'd into itself. Ask him why he is so confident of certain matters; he can give no other, or at least no better account of it, than this, that the thing hath made so deep an impression on his mind, that he is obliged to give himself up to it. And as many of both sexes, of the female especially, have tender and active imaginations without a due ballance of *reason*, it is no wonder they lie open to a thousand delusions.

§ 16. THE errors of the *imagination* turn chiefly on the *existence* of things, but not only; the *nature* of them likewise, or their kind and qualities, being too often estimated by the same false measure. Fancy communicates to the object the colour which it happens to be tinctur'd with itself: it impresses the contrary characters of great or little, beautiful or deform'd, serious or ridiculous, good or evil, according to the humour that predominates. Persons that have a great force of imagination, are seldom, if ever, in perfect friendship with *reason*. *Reason* is too cool, and slow, and sober, too servile and exact for them: the warmth of imagination; its starts, and sallies, and flights, its contempt of rules under the notion of chains and shackles, are much more agreeable. Its light is not so clear as that of *reason*, but more dazzling.

§ 17. A CELEBRATED author makes abundantly more use of his *imagination* than it were to be wish'd he had done; and this when he would fain persuade the reader he was using his *reason*. Never did man act the impostor more artfully at the very time he was instructing the world how to detect all impostors: he bids us be on our guard against counterfeits, only that he may play the cheat with less suspicion. This author,

in a discourse of *enthusiasm*, where he establishes *ridicule* as the universal rule or measure of truth and falshood, is from one end of that discourse to the other guilty of confounding the terms *reason*, *ridicule*, *good humour*, *cheerfulness*, just as serv'd his occasion ; but how long have these been synonymous terms ? He himself seems to have been conscious they were not ; for after having said that *ridicule* ought to be applied to every thing ^z without exception, when he comes to speak of the supreme Being, be-
 thinking himself that the word *ridicule* was too shocking, he wisely dropt it, and only contends for *good humour* in religion, and thinking of God with freedom and *pleasantness* ^a ; tho', with his Lordship's leave, *good humour* and *pleasantness* are after all, a little too much upon the familiar ; his *good humour*, as he calls it, in this case, can hardly be deem'd *good manners*. In another place ^b he is angry with people for being afraid to use their *reason* freely, even on that very question whether God really be or not : why had he not kept to his first term of *ridicule* ? plainly, because he saw it would disgust all his sober readers, of whom the thinking part are against the use of *reason*, truly so call'd, in religious subjects, as little as my Lord *Shaftesbury* could be. The talents of *reason* and *ridi-*
cule,

^z Pag. 19.^a Page 36.^b Page 52.

rule, or judgment and wit, are widely different. *Ridicule* owes its origin to the *imagination*; nor is it every imagination that will serve for this purpose, it must be one of a particular mode and texture. A man may possess *reason* in the highest perfection, and have so little of the other faculty as to become *ridiculous* himself the moment he offers at the way of *ridicule*. There can be no such thing as *ridicule* without comparisons and images (the supplying of which is the business of imagination) and those properly chosen, that they may strike on the imaginations of the persons we would entertain, and produce in them the motions we experiment in ourselves, like unisons in musick. The *absurd* and the *ridiculous* are two things; else, wherever one of these was found, it would be attended with the other. It is not difficult for any man of common sense to *discover* the most glaring absurdities in the *doctrine* of *transubstantiation*; but 'tis not every one could have set it in that *ridiculous* light which archbishop *Tillotson* hath done: this demanded such a degree of wit and good humour both, as but few can pretend to. In this excellent author we have an instance of the union of these two qualities of judgment and wit; but to one instance where they are thus united, it were easy to produce a hundred

where they are found afunder; judgment without wit, for want of a sufficient vivacity in the imagination; and wit without judgment, through the redundance of it. Wit, according to the proverb, is allied to madness, in this perfectly unrefembling judgment, which stands in direct opposition to it. Nay, wit alone does not compleat the character of the comic talker; to command the laugh in a circle of well-bred people, there must with wit be *humour* too; by which is meant a certain turn for the *ridiculous*, which makes a man more quick to spy it out in any subject, and more pleas'd with it when found. It cannot be supposed, that to an angel any thing appears properly *ridiculous*; who, as he is without the corporeal organs that minister to laughter, so he knows nothing of that mechanical emotion of mind which accompanies it; the use of this passion being only for such heterogeneous creatures as we are, to be a ballance to our stupidity, and a relief against the spleen and vapours: and even with us 'tis as changeable almost as the fashion of our clothes. There was a time when a couple of grave *animals* were in great reputation, I mean the *ass* and the *owl*, which, by persons merrily dispos'd, are now seldom beheld without laughter. Whereupon a question ariseth, how, if these two creatures were

were to pass under the test of *ridicule*, we should be able to make a judgment of them; since, with us, they would not be able to bear this test, which among the ancients they could well enough do? In this age they are *ridiculous*, formerly they were not: which is the way of determining who have the right on their side, the ancients or we? Were *Homer's* well known image of the *ass*, which he makes use of to describe *Ajax* sullenly retiring from the field of battle, to be tried by a jury of modern critics, and in the method of *ridicule*, whatever veneration they might have for the blind *bard*, I doubt they would find it difficult to acquit him; and more so, to pronounce the comparison just and noble. We may add, that *novelty* is essential to the *ridiculous*, according to those verses of *Juvenal*:

*When cranes invade, his little sword and shield
The pigmy takes, and straight attends the
field;*

*The fight's soon o'er, the cranes descend and
bear*

*The sprawling warriors thro' the liquid air:
Now here should such a sight appear to view
All men would split, the sight would please
while new;*

*There's none concern'd where every day they
fight,
And not one warrior is a foot in height.*

Juv. Sat. 13.

And is not this a notable criterion, which if men consent to appeal to, the same things may, at distant times, or at the same time among different persons, be both *true* and *false*, *ridiculous* and not *ridiculous*?

§ 18. ALL that *this* writer seems to be apprehensive of is, the *melancholly* way of examining *religion*; but is there no danger from any other extream? As there is a dark and sullen, so there is an airy, a jovial and sanguine *imagination*; and, if one of these let alone, engenders *superstition*, the other as certainly betrays into *libertinism*. In his great *zeal* against the former, he hath quite forgot to take any notice of the latter. We can have no *dread* or *suspicion*, saith he, to render us uneasy; for it is *malice* only, and not *goodness*, that can make us afraid. Now I thought, that though there be no *malice* in God, there was such a thing as *justice* belonging to the Governor of the world, which they that make bold with his laws had some *reason* to dread. Where's the necessity of God's being all *terror* or all *goodness*?

goodness? I fear this author is himself an instance of the truth of what he observes, that a very small foundation of any passion will serve us, not only to act it well, but even to work ourselves into it beyond our own reach. The passion of this noble 'Lord lay to a merry, and sometimes a splenetic *enthusiasm*, which appears every where almost to have been an over-match for his *reason*; insomuch, that no friend to religion, of but ordinary judgment, need fear his arguments, after having first blunted the edge which his wit (that must be confess'd to have been uncommon) hath given to his thoughts and expressions. I would only ask, what *imagination*, of any kind, hath to do in the discovery or trial of truth? Imagination is a coloured glass; whether it be smut or paint that daubs it, makes little difference, since, in either case, 'tis impossible to have a true discernment of objects thro' such a medium. ---^d To the question, what *ridicule* can lie against *reason*? I answer, none against *reason* itself; and yet against what is *reasonable* there may: the most reasonable things in the world may have some circumstance, which to a ludicrous fancy shall afford a handle for exposing them. A great part of the prejudices against the *scriptures*, on account of

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the simplicity of the stile, the little regard to the rules of human eloquence, the plain narration of facts, and representation of customs and manners not very well agreeing with our own, are to be ascribed to this cause. *Reason* finds nothing of an objection in all this, against a book that was designed for the benefit of men of all ranks and capacities ; not to teach them *artificial refinements*, but to make them *wise* and *good* ; but the *imagination* meets with a great deal that offends its delicacy. If *ridicule* be ever allowable, yet we ought not to begin with it. Let *reason* point out the error, and then, if there be occasion, let wit lend its aid to render it *ridiculous*. 'Tis possible an opinion receiv'd for true may be found to be an error ; and a custom held sacred have nothing but the prejudices, bred by length of time, to support it : and so it is, that a man of a venerable aspect may be a hypocrite ; shall we therefore treat him as such, before we know him to be so ? Perhaps he is what he appears, and then the *ridicule* returns upon ourselves ; a man never looking so silly as after he finds himself to have laugh'd in the wrong place.

§ 19. THE sum is, that every *rational being*, as was said before, is obliged to govern himself by *reason* ; by which is meant, that *reason* is to prove the duty, and to supply

supply the motive. We are not only to practise what *reason* dictates, but to practise it because it is enjoin'd by *reason*; and upon the views and principles which *reason* proposes; that is, in short, because the several duties commanded by *reason* are founded on the *nature of things*, being agreeable to the faculties of our minds, the state and circumstances of our *beings*, the situation we are in with respect to our fellow creatures, and above all, to the obligations we are under to study and obey the will of our Maker; otherwise we are not to be deem'd *reasonable agents*; nor do we so much follow *reason*, though we happen to travel in the same road with her, as *inclination*. There are two useful principles planted in *human nature* by the wise Author of it; a *religious dread* and *veneration* of a supreme power, and a *disinterested benevolence*. I hope I shall not give offence if I call these two by the name of *rational instincts*. I call them *instincts*, because they are not the result of laborious, or even any proper *reasoning*, on the obligations we are under to our Creator, or to our fellow creatures, but co-exist with the ideas of their respective objects, and are found in souls of the most unequal capacities and improvements. I call them *rational*, because, though they are not the proper effect and offspring of *reason*, yet

yet they are seated in none but rational beings; do not exert themselves to any considerable degree till the age of *reason*; and, finally, are both coincident with the dictates of *reason*, and strengthen'd and elevated by them. There is some truth even in that atheistical observation,

Primum in orbe deos fecit timor - - -

The natural fears of the human mind, in concurrence with tradition, and the proofs of a Deity from his visible works, led men to believe and reverence a Being, on whom they, and all other things, were supposed to depend; and the same fears degenerating into superstition, and practised upon by the craft of politicians, priests, &c. made way for the spreading of *polytheism*, or the belief of many Gods among the *heathen*; together, with the numerous, absurd, and cruel rites belonging to their worship.

§ 20. AND then, as for *benevolence*, it hath been clearly proved to be a natural principle, by the author of the *Inquiry into the original of our ideas of beauty and virtue*; and, before him, in the *Spectators*^a, where it is stiled, *An instinct, a generous prepossession, antecedent to reason from interest*; which are the words of the *enquirer*: there is so little difference, that the latter may be supposed to have sprung from the former.

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^a Spectator, N^o. 588 and 610.

That we might not confound the *virtue* of benevolence with the *instinct* call'd by that name, the author of the *Spectators* very seasonably and justly observes, "That the
" desire of doing good is no otherwise a
" virtue than as it is improved and regulated
" by *reason*." This limitation the *enquirer* forgot, or did not think proper to insert, because he was of opinion, that the virtue of *benevolence* was one and the same with the *natural instinct*; which I beg leave to think is a very great mistake. Merely natural *inclinations*, that spring up spontaneously in the human heart, without the influence of *reason*, do not deserve the name of *virtue*, but *inclinations* that flow from *reason*. To be prepossessed on the right side by a kind of mechanism, is a felicity of temper; to be inclined to it from a view to the merits of the cause, is laudable. True virtue lies in the determination of the elective faculty to that which is reasonable, as such. He that is benevolent from a happy *instinct*, possesses the material part of *virtue*; but it is not really virtuous till he acts from a regard to *reason*; which is then only done, when the suitability of this or that method of action to the order of the world, and to the laws of the Almighty, to whom we are infinitely more indebted than we can be to all other beings, is the prevailing inducement to our choice

choice. From whence, by the way, it may be proper to take notice, that placing the formality of *virtue* in a conformity to *reason*, is no way inconsistent with placing the same thing in a conformity to the *will* of God; forasmuch as *reason*, which always falls in with the *will* of God, will instruct every man, that advises with her, in his duty, to make the *will* of God, both as the first and the best of Beings, however discover'd, the invariable rule of his behaviour.

§ 21. THE author of the *Inquiry*^b had reason to say, that had we no sense of good distinct from the advantage or interest arising from the external senses, and the perceptions of beauty and harmony, our admiration and love towards a fruitful field, or commodious habitation, would be much the same with what we have towards a generous friend, or a noble character for both; are, or may be, advantageous to us. May we not argue against this author's notion of *virtue*, after a like manner? If without considering our actions, as under the guidance of *reason* and *choice*, an instinct of benevolence makes them virtuous, so that whoever acts in pursuance of the intimations of this benevolence, (let him act never so necessarily or blindly) is truly virtuous; we may say in this case, as the author before, on the supposition of mens having regard only to their own advantage,

^b Pag. 107. of the first edit.

vantage, that we have the same love towards a fruitful field, &c. for a fruitful field, a river, much more the ocean, the light, the air, are extensively beneficial; and since the most benevolent of mankind can be no more, there is the same ground to value and esteem those as these, in case *nature*, separate from *reason*, be the sole original of the usefulness of both. The former, indeed, have no intention of being serviceable, which the latter have: but if the cause or spring of this intention be not *reason*, but *instinct*, which puts forth itself in actions beneficial to mankind, after much the same manner as the spherical form of the particles of water is the occasion of their fluidity, or the sap circulating in the vessels of vegetables shoots out in branches, leaves, and fruit; I do not see how commendation is any more due to the one than to the other. The principle and end of actions must be taken into the account, to compleat their moral character. Let us, of two men, suppose one, without making any use of his *reason*, to be strongly inclined to acts of compassion, liberality, and all other social virtues, which accordingly he practises as opportunity offers; never once reflecting that it is his duty so to act as a *reasonable agent* and the *creature of God*: the other, as to his natural disposition, very unhappy, being

ing incompassionate, avaritious, &c. but, by the right use of his *reason*, possess'd with a high sense of *moral obligations*, and a prevailing resolution to act up to them, in spite of his natural reluctance to generous and public-spirited actions: I ask, which of the two is the more virtuous? So far is the former from deserving the preference, that he is not to be numbred among the virtuous, not so much as in the lowest class; having the outside of virtue, but nothing of the life and soul; while the latter, tho' by reason of the contrary *inclination*, which he is forced to be continually struggling with, he may not be so widely beneficial according to his abilities, must be pronounced to have a very uncommon degree of virtue; the strength of the *resolution* to act virtuously, (which may be stiled a *moral inclination*, as the *instinct* of benevolence is a *mechanical* one) being best calculated by the resistance or opposition which it overcomes. It is therefore this *moral inclination* that constitutes the *virtue* of benevolence; while the *mechanical* one is no more than a happiness, and a happiness it must be own'd to be, since *instinct* may easily become subservient to religion and virtue, leading men, as it were by the hand, till it hath delivered them to the tuition of *reason*, to be instructed farther in those things of which nature hath given

given them certain hints and anticipations, and disposing them more impartially to weigh, and more heartily to follow its advice. Few will be at the trouble of tracing out the obligations of religion and morality from the principles of *reason*; and yet fewer would do this, if there was not a kind of bias that carried inquisitive minds to such contemplations, and was the ground of that pleasure and satisfaction which they receive from them. We should therefore regard it as an argument of the wisdom and goodness of the governour of the world, that he hath link'd men together in society by these natural bonds of religion and benevolence, and as an invitation to us from the same Being, to advance farther, and to aspire to the noblest heights of virtue and devotion; having by *instinct* only enter'd us into the way, and taught us the first steps to them.

§ 22. WHEN religion and benevolence proceed from mere *instinct*, and when from *reason*, is, in most cases, easily enough known from the effects. *Instinct*, blundering in the dark, and without a guide, as well as without light, almost unavoidably breeds *superstition*. Now superstition is such a fear of the Deity, as represents him hard to be pleased in some respects, and no less easy to be pleased in others; and even as being pleased and angry without any good *reason* for either.

ther. The *cause* of this fear is a gross and stupid ignorance, arising from the almost total neglect of our *reason*, in the affairs of religion ; the *effects* of it are as hurtful as they are uncomfortable. Ignorance of the Deity, arising from a criminal disuse of our *reason* on this subject, is the immediate original of superstition ; for, surely, it must argue most wretched ignorance in any, and that ignorance, a most inexcusable disregard of our *reason*, to suppose that God is difficult to be pleased, not upon the account of the spotless purity of his nature (which renders it impossible for him not to hate moral evil, or to delight in any thing besides moral good) but because he is apprehended to be like some men, who are not governed by *reason*, but by *humour* ; and do this or that, not for that it becomes them, and is fit and expedient to be done, but because they have a fancy and an inclination to do it. And as men of this capricious humour some temper very often love to impose odd ridiculous services on their inferiors, to be complimented by them, and are most pleased with those that fawn and cringe to them, and shape themselves to their humour ; so do the superstitious foolishly imagine it to be in respect of God. This makes them to abound in external professions of esteem, and in the ceremonious part of religion ; while they
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are miserably deficient in works of righteousness, and in true solid inward piety. It matters not how little care they take of their hearts and lives ; what passions mutiny in the one, and what evil customs prevail in the other, as long as they are solicitously careful to make all up by the frequency and length of their devotions, their pretended zeal for the name of God, and for that which they call religion. They may be as unjust, as uncharitable, as selfish as they have a mind to be ; so they be strict and punctual in certain performances, which they conceit to be mighty acceptable to the supreme Being. And can any thing discover the absence of *reason* more plainly than such conceptions of the Deity ? conceptions so unworthy of him ? so repugnant, I will not say to the revelations he hath made of himself in the scripture, but to the first and most native ideas of our own minds, which always teach us to ascribe infinite wisdom to God, and to believe that he governs the world by rules of eternal order and fitness ? The want of *reason* to regulate our natural fears of the Deity, is farther seen in the effects of *superstition*, which are no less hurtful, than they are uncomfortable. Superstition is a most uncomfortable thing, filling the mind with endless jealousies and suspicions, leaving us uncertain, after all that

we have done to please God, whether he will be pleased with us or no ; for when the Almighty is not supposed to consult the perfection of his nature, and the real honour and glory of his name, or to guide himself by any settled measures in his dealings and dispensations with the children of men, how can he be otherwise regarded, than with a secret dread and terror ? Superstition being the offspring of ignorance, must needs produce a low abject spirit, and beget restless disquieting thoughts ; after much the same manner as darkness and solitude are apt to create unaccountable fears in weak and timorous souls. So gloomy and uncomfortable is superstition ! and to every jot as pernicious ; being an utter enemy to sound religion, while it promotes something else, very different from it, if not inconsistent with it under that name ; making people scrupulously exact in some trivial observations of their own, or which have been handed down by tradition from their fathers, or inculcated upon them by their blind or designing guides ; and perhaps every whit as regardless of their *moral* behaviour, of the temper and habit of their minds, the inclinations of their hearts, and what the scripture calls *true religion* and *undefiled before God*. The superstitious man may be very conscientious in his way ; but then 'tis a false, a misinform'd

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form'd conscience, a conscience under the power of wrong principles ; a conscience that binds where it should loose, and leaves a man loose, where it should bind him fastest. A terrible example of all this we meet with in a superstition that is of the blackest and most dismal complexion, that presents God to the mind as cruel and inexorable, delighted with the miseries of the greater part of his creatures, which he absolutely decrees ; and, withal, so very kind to a few as to snatch them away with an irresistible hand, and translate them in a whirlwind to heaven. Having these notions of God, the superstitious will have suitable ones of religion ; and instead of placing it in meekness, purity and charity, in being and doing good, they will be ready to fancy that it is made up of voluntary and needless austerities, afflicting the body without measure or any good end ; in a round of tedious duties, and burdensome observances ; abstaining from things which God hath not forbidden, and making sins and duties where he hath made none. The length of this paragraph will, I make no doubt, be pardoned by those who consider what dreadful work *superstition* hath made in the world, and will still make where it reigns ; which it is for ever likely to do, where *reason*, fighting under the banner of *revelation*, doth not dethrone it.

The first original of *atheism* itself in the heathen world, seems to have been superstition. Religion among the *pagans* was indeed quite overgrown with it; insomuch, that it required some time and pains to find out religion under such a load of rubbish as superstition had heap'd upon it. This being the case, that what men commonly call'd religion, was at that time little else besides superstition, men of an atheistical bent of mind immediately inferr'd that all religion was superstition: not only the worship of many gods, but of any one God; not only those fabulous accounts of the *Elysian* fields, and the infernal shades, but all belief of any other world besides this, and of future recompences for the righteous and the wicked; not only the vulgar theology, which gave a relation of the births of the gods, and their several parts and provinces in the government of the world, but the general doctrine of creation and providence: and thus at length religion and superstition with these men came to be synonymous terms; and whatever could be said against the latter, (as to be sure a great deal may very justly) they turn'd into an objection against the former; which makes the *Epicurean* poet say of religion, what hath but too much truth in it, when applied to superstition;

Humana

* *Humana ante oculos fœdè cum vita jaceret
In terris oppressa gravi sub religione
Quæ caput a cœli regionibus ostendebat,
Horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans! &c.*

Atheism in the christian world, at the opening of the reformation, may be easily shewn to have had the same rise; agreeably to which 'tis an observation of ^b Dr. Geddes, that there are more people of no religion in *Italy*, than in all the world besides.

§ 23. A BENEVOLENCE, that is the fruit of *mere instinct*, hath the disadvantage to be solitary, partial, and less firm and constant: such a benevolence, as much as it seems form'd for society, and really is so for some sorts of it, is in truth a solitary thing, detach'd and sever'd from the company of the *virtues*; which never assemble in a full chorus, or march in a body, but when *reason* is at the head of them. Hence are those monstrous, and yet common conjunctions of *benevolence* and *irreligion*, and of *benevolence* and *dissoluteness of manners*; and a man of great good-nature, that wants not an inclination to serve the community, proves one of the worst enemies to it by his vices. Nor, if we examine the matter to the bottom, is there any thing we can justly

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^a Lucret. l. 1.

^b Miscell.

be surprized at in all this ; since the man is so far consistent with himself, as, amidst those seeming contradictions which his conduct is fill'd with, to act from the same principle. He follows nature in his benevolent actions ; and, 'tis as true, that he follows it when he abandons himself to a sensual and ungodly life : the difference is, in one case 'tis pure genuine nature ; in the other nature corrupted ; but still 'tis only *animal nature*, or that nature which is born before *reason*. Another characteristic of this benevolence, is its being maim'd and partial, which makes it appear as unsightly as a figure, otherwise beautiful, lopp'd of some of its principal members. Such a benevolence is as short of the compleat idea of benevolence, as the nature it grows out of, is of the entire nature of man. Persons influenc'd by this narrow benevolence, love others at much the same rate as they love themselves. As their self-love overlooks the chief and noblest part of themselves, so their benevolence hath no more regard to the highest interest of others. What strikes their senses or fancy, affects alike their *self-love* and their *benevolence* ; but where there is nothing to work upon these, they feel not the least emotions of either of these *passions*, and so are perfectly unconcerned for what relates to themselves,
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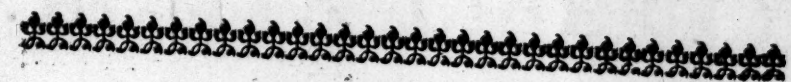
or those who are most dear to them. The sight, or even relation of a single person in calamitous circumstances, pinch'd with extreme poverty, rack'd by pain, distorted in his limbs, or groaning under the heavy yoke of tyranny and oppression, causes as disagreeable a perception, and after the same irresistible manner, as the most grating and discordant sounds to the ear; and makes them as much in haste to remove the former, if it be in their power, as to silence the latter: while the greatest corruption of manners, a mind most miserably dis-tempered, and enslav'd to its *passions*, and a course of life that bodes nothing but utter ruin in the end, disturb them no more than if they were the most trivial evils, or no evils at all; of which, this plain account is to be given, that *reason* being the only proper judge of these calamities, they that do not form their notions and their conduct upon *reason*, are not sensible of them. The last mark, by which this sort of *benevolence* betrays its falsity, is, its not being able to stand the shock of violent temptations; not having the stability and strength of a *benevolence* that is enforc'd by *reason*. There is a subordination in the *passions*; the strongest of all which is, *self-love*, I mean, falsely so call'd, or a *self-love*

that looks not beyond this life, and its low concerns : this *self-love* is, I say, the strongest of the *passions* ; so that when other *passions* coincide with this, or do not clash with it, they shall be gratify'd ; but as soon as there happens to be a dispute between them, in a point of importance, and either some darling interest of our own, or a foreign one, must be sacrificed, 'tis not difficult to foresee on which side the scale will turn. It is from hence we are furnish'd with an easy solution of a *phenomenon*, at first sight extremely puzzling ; of persons who, in lower stations of life, have maintain'd the character of an unblemish'd probity, a great steadiness and sincerity in their friendships, and a fidelity in their trusts, which it was thought nothing could corrupt ; and yet, when their *self-love* hath been more strongly attack'd, when they have been advanced to high places, and the temptations to dishonesty have been vastly greater than before, have at once forfeited the reputation they had gotten ; have grown artful and designing, betrayed their friends, been false to their trusts, sold their country, and stuck at no measures, how base and shameful soever, that would help to raise and aggrandize them : their *self-love* falling in with their *ambition*, or love of greatness
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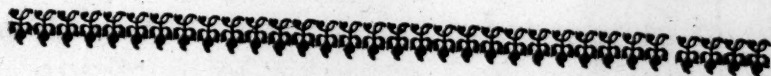
and power, hath stifled and choak'd all the seeds of goodness, sincerity, and generosity in their souls. At best, if our *self-love* does not fly at grandeur, it will not be content to forego life, and ease, and safety; it may be more moderate in its demands, but will be sure to insist on the rights of *self-preservation*; and rather than consent to part with these, be the cause what it will, will give up all those interests which *benevolence* had taken under its charge. This is the almost certain issue, where mens *benevolence*, like their *self-love*, is of the lower kind, and entirely mechanical; whereas a *benevolence* that takes its rise from *reason*, and is established by it, hath a kind of *infinite* force: for *reason* summons together all the considerations of duty and interest; the obligations we are under to our Maker; our relation to other *reasonable* beings; the praise and pleasure of acting agreeably to this relation; together with the glorious and eternal rewards of another life: teaching us at the same time to engage the aids of *divine grace*; by which means it communicates a firmness to our *benevolent* affections, which a *carnal self-love*, with all its batteries, cannot shake. And as for that *self-love* which is under the guidance of *reason*, it is impossible a case should happen, in which our
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benevolence, as regulated by the same *reason*, is inconsistent with it; even though we act up to its highest demands, by devoting our earthly all to the service of our friends, of the publick, of the church, or of mankind.





OF
HUMAN LIBERTY.



THE LIBRARY OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1000 N. EAST 58TH STREET



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HUMAN LIBERTY.

§ 1. **T**HE *freedom* of *human* actions seems to have been in dispute, as long ago as men first learnt to philosophise; and, perhaps, was never more opposed than in the present age: which, whether we are to regard as a sign of a more than ordinary advancement in knowledge, or degeneracy of manners, every one is left to determine for himself. I am no way surprized to see those turn advocates for *fate* and *necessity*, whose conduct will admit of no other excuse: but what motive or plea any man of tolerable sense and virtue can have for appearing on that side of the question, is to me incomprehensible.

§ 2. THE author of the *Philosophical Enquiry concerning human liberty*^a, very gravely tells his readers, “ that the notions he advances are so far from being inconsistent with, that they are the sole foundation of morality and laws, of rewards and punishments

^a Preface.

"*ments* in society; and that the notions he
"explodes are subversive of them." Now
if the fact be as it is here represented, 'tis
fit men should be inform'd of a thing so
much for their benefit to know. But that
we may not take a matter of such moment
on trust, and from persons that are known
to be too free of their assertions, to expect
belief farther than they bring clear proof
with them, let us make a little trial of
this useful doctrine of *fate*. Here's a man
strongly tempted to play the knave; but,
believing himself master of his own actions,
and answerable for them, he is secretly re-
strained thro' *shame* of the foulness of the
crime, or *fear* of its consequences in an
after-life. Whether he be free or no, matters
not. He imagines that he is free, and shall
deserve blame and punishment, if he does
any thing injurious to his fellow-creatures,
or dishonourable to his Maker; and by this
thought he is aw'd and kept within some
bounds. This is *conscience*, a persuasion of
the natural and intrinsic differences of good
and evil, and of our own *liberty* to chuse one
or the other; which inward persuasion fills
the mind with *joy* or *sorrow*, *hope* or *fear*,
confidence or *shame*, according as we appre-
hend ourselves to have made a right or a
wrong use of our freedom in observing or
neglecting these essential and everlasting dif-
ferences

ferences of things. Let us now put the supposition the other way, of a person in the same *circumstances* as the former, but not under the same *restraint*. Is he hired to write a libel, or to commit a murder? he esteems himself, as properly, no more chargeable with these actions than the pen or the sword he employs in them; he directs these, while he himself is directed by a higher hand: he is but the *amanuensis* or executioner to fate. As long as he hath this view of the case, what is there left to be a check on his *inclinations*? what room for *conscience* to terrify or reproach him? With this apology at hand, will he not readily follow *appetite* and *passion*, where it can be done with safety, and execute whatever a present interest shall dictate?

§ 3. WHEN a man is told ^b, “ that all
 “ his actions are so determined by the *causes*
 “ preceding each action, that not one past
 “ action could possibly not have come to
 “ pass - - - that in every point of time he
 “ is unavoidably determin’d by the circum-
 “ stances he is in, and the causes he is un-
 “ der, to do that one thing he does, and
 “ not possibly to do any other - - - that
 “ *liberty*, or freedom from *necessity*, is an
 “ absurd inconsistent thing - - - and mens
 “ repenting of any of their actions, proceeds
 “ upon

^b *Enquiry*, pag. 11, 13, 45.

“ upon a mistake ; as if, because in the re-
 “ penting humour they find no present mo-
 “ tive to do those actions, they might not
 “ have done them at the time they did
 “ them, and that they were free from *neces-*
 “ *sity*, as they were from outward *impedi-*
 “ *ments* in the doing them.” - - - - I say,
 when a man is told all this, with an air of
 seriousness, and by one that pretends to have
 a more than common insight into *human na-*
ture, I need not ask, whether, supposing
 him to be of the same mind with the au-
 thor, this is likely to be an additional *curb*
 on an evil *inclination*, or rather will not take
 away the restraint he was before under from
 the apprehension of the guilt he should
 contract, and the anguish, experienced or
 foreseen, of repentance ; which he can have
 no ground to be afraid of, if he believe every
 act of wickedness to be so necessary, and
 every act of repentance so foolish and mis-
 taken a thing as it is here described.

§ 4. IN the life of *Alexander*, by *Plu-*
tarch, we meet with a memorable example,
 to this purpose: That young conqueror,
 having, in the fury of his passion, kill'd ho-
 nest *Clytus*, a faithful soldier, and to whom
 but a little before he owed the preservation
 of his life in battle, had no sooner pulled the
 spear out of his body, with which he had
 transfix'd him, but, struck with the baseness
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of the action, he would have dispatch'd himself with the same weapon, had not his friends prevented, and by force carried him to his chamber, where he wept most grievously, and could not be brought to forgive himself, till *Aristander*, to comfort him, made him believe that all had happened by an unavoidable *fatality*, and then he was quickly satisfied; as he very well might, when the death of *Clitus*, tho' by his hand, was no more his crime, than if he had been kill'd by the fall of a tile-stone, or by some natural distemper. Another instance shall be some *Roman* legions^c, who had revolted to the enemy, and, partly by the ignominious usage they met with, and partly by the success of the *Roman* general in those parts, were afterwards made sensible of their error. The *historian* observes, " That these
 " legions were a most miserable spectacle ;
 " that, dejected with a consciousness of their
 " crime, they stood with their eyes fixed on
 " the ground ; that they had not confidence
 " enough to return the salutes of the army,
 " nor made any answer to those who en-
 " deavoured to comfort and encourage them,
 " concealing themselves in their tents, and
 " shunning the light itself ; and that it was
 " not so much *danger* and *fear*, as *shame*, that
 " had this effect upon them : the victorious

^c Tacit. Hist. lib. 4.

“ army likewise appearing astonished, and
“ while they dar’d not offer any thing in
“ their behalf, by their tears and silence
“ pleading for their pardon, till at length
“ *Cerealis* quieted their minds, by telling
“ them, that all the *misfortunes* which had
“ been occasioned by the *contentions* among
“ the soldiers and their officers, were the
“ work of *fate*.” -- Now for the same *reason*,
as the notion of mens being *fatally* deter-
mined in their *worst* actions, eases them of
the *torments* of *repentance* for what they
have done ; it must much more destroy the
reluctance of *conscience* under a violent tempt-
ation, and hush all its fears ; since, when
the *passions* are fired with the view of *pleasure*
or *advantage*, men are willing to accept of
any excuse for gratifying their *inclination*,
and therefore cannot but approve of such a
plea as is reckon’d very substantial, even after
the action is past, the pleasure vanish’d,
and the passions being grown cool again,
leave them the power to judge of things with
more impartiality. So that were it true,
that the *liberty* of the *will* were subversive of
morality and *laws*, and *fate* and *necessity* the
sole foundation of them ; yet I maintain,
and, I think, have fully prov’d, that the
quite contrary holds as to the *belief* of the
one or the other ; he that believes he is *free*,
feeling other restraints, and being acted by
I other

other springs and motives, than the man who is persuaded of his being hurried by necessity to do every thing he does.

§ 5. UPON the whole, I wish the example of a brother *heathen* may have some weight with a certain *writer*, who would despise any thing that came recommended under the name of *christian*: *Cotta*^d, fearing he might be thought to carry his objections against a providence too far, adds, *Invita in hoc loco versatur oratio, videtur enim auctoritatem afferre peccandi: recte videretur; nisi & virtutis & vitiorum sine ulla divina ratione* (he means, without taking in the consideration of a divine Being, and a divine Providence) *grave ipsius conscientiae pondus esset, qua sublata, jacent omnia.* Tho' this be certainly a great mistake, that *conscience* may subsist without interesting a supreme Being in the actions and affairs of mankind; yet I would take notice of the tenderness and caution of this *heathen*, when disputing on a point of this importance, lest he should say any thing that might seem to give countenance and authority to *vice*; and of his observation, that whatever distinction is made between *virtue* and *vice*, in the practice of the world, it is owing to the *weight of conscience*, which cannot be taken away, but this distinction goes with it. Let the author

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of

^d Cicero de Nat. Deor. lib. iii. § 35.

of the *Enquiry* read this, and blush, if his principles will let him, to reflect on the outrage he hath done the cause of *virtue*, by attempting to shew that *conscience* owes not its being to *nature*, but to a false opinion men have taken up of their being *free agents*; that *repentance*, which is nothing else but an act of *conscience*, upon the review of a past action supposed to be criminal, is without any foundation: infomuch, that, if what he says be true, a man may as reasonably repent of his not preventing the mischief done by earthquakes and inundations, as of the hurt which his fellow-creatures have suffered from any actions of his own.

§ 6. IN short, to consider the writings that have been published within the compass of a few years, one would think that some men had entered into a confederacy to destroy all that is good and valuable from the earth, and to set the corrupt passions of mankind at liberty, that they might riot without controul, and render a *life*, miserable and sinful enough at best, a scene of the most perfect madness and distraction. We have had discourses to prove that the *soul* is material and mortal; that all our *views* are naturally mean and selfish; and that the *will* hath no more freedom than the hand it moves, being necessarily moved by something else. 'Tis certain that these principles are

very suitable company, and do their business much more effectually in conjunction than they could do asunder. If I thought there was no benevolent *instinct*, no generous *propensity* in *nature*; yet as long as I conceived myself to have a superior power within me, that could direct and over-rule *nature*, I should conclude I was obliged in *conscience*, and by the strength of *resolution*, to do that which my nature did not incline me to. Or if I held the *liberty* of the *will* for a chimera, but granted such a thing as a disinterested *benevolence*, the shame of not appearing as benevolent as others, and the regard which I observed the world to pay to this amiable character, might keep me from doing those base and injurious things, to which I was led by my natural temper. Or, finally, if with the denial of all good *inclinations* in *nature*, and the *liberty* of *human actions*, I join'd the *belief* of the *immortality* of the *soul*, and a *future state* of *rewards* and *punishments*; this *belief*, however inconsistent, might operate so far as to carry me to a course of *actions* contrary to the tendency of my *principles* in the two former particulars: whereas, now there seems not to be any hold left for *virtue*, and no banks to oppose against *vice*; or none but what it will easily throw down.

§ 7. WILL they say, it is not in their power to write and talk otherwise than they

do? the *excuse*, I own to be valid, admitting the *truth* of their *hypothesis*, that all the *actions* of mankind are *necessary*: and therefore, if I expostulate with them on the ill consequences attending the prevalency of their opinion, and urge these as a *reason* why they should not be fond of publishing it, my design is not to upbraid them as, upon their own principles, doing an ill thing, of which they ought to repent, and for which they deserve to be punish'd; but, to fight them with their own weapon, since even allowing them their principles, the knowledge of the mischievous tendency of the notion they espouse, will necessarily restrain them, unless they are of an envious and malevolent temper, from all endeavours, either by writing or conversation, to promote it. Let their actions be *free* or *necessary*, 'tis impossible this consideration should not have so much influence on a good-natur'd man, and a friend to his species, as make him keep his thoughts to himself, when in propagating them he can hope for nothing but to see *vice* and *wickedness* spread in equal proportion with that which he calls *truth*. For which reason, I must needs look on all those, who being convinc'd of the good *influence* which this error, that men are *free agents*, if it be an error, hath upon their lives, and the malignant *influence* of the contrary opinion, are yet violently

violently bent on undeceiving the world in this matter, as enemies in their minds to the happiness of their fellow-creatures, and receiving a diabolical *pleasure* from their *vices* and *miseries*. Let them clear themselves, if they can. I am glad, in the mean while, to read those words of the *Enquirer* immediately following the afore-cited: " This I
" judg'd necessary to make out in treating a
" subject that hath relation to *morality* ; be-
" cause nothing can be true which subverts
" these things ; and all discourse must be de-
" fective wherein the reader perceives any
" disagreement to *moral truth*, which is as
" evident as any *speculative truth*, and much
" more necessary to be render'd clear to the
" reader's mind than *truth* in all other
" sciences." This is very honestly said, and if he keep to the *criterion* here laid down, of the *subserviency* of any notion to *morality*, he must acknowledge himself obliged from what hath been now, and will farther be, offered, not only to give up his notions as *inexpedient*, and therefore not fit to be defended, but as utterly *false*.

§ 8. BUT that it may not be thought I am begging quarter for an opinion I am not able to defend, I shall now proceed to set the *liberty* of *human actions* in such a light, as I flatter myself will discover the great *unreasonableness* of denying or disputing it : to

which purpose, I shall begin with *stating the true notion of human liberty*. -- Liberty is oppos'd to *necessity*, and varies in its idea according to the *necessity* it is oppos'd to. The common distinction of *necessity* is into *physical* and *moral*; which I do not so well approve of, for more reasons than one. The terms *internal* and *external*, do, I think, convey the same ideas with much more advantage. *External necessity* is a *necessity* impos'd by some external *cause*. Such is the *necessity* a *body* is under of moving when impell'd by a superior force; in opposition to which *necessity*, a being is then *free* in its motion, when it is *αὐτοκίνητος*, mov'd of itself, not by the *impulse* of some other being. "Let us hear *Plato*, (saith an admirer of his ^e) as a kind of god among the philosophers, who will have two sorts of *motion*: one, the *movents* own; the other, external; and what is self-mov'd to be more divine than what is acted by some other thing. This kind of *motion* he supposes peculiar to souls, and that from them all *motion* hath its beginning." This alone deserves the name of *spontaneity*; for, as *Aristotle* ^f rightly observes, whatever comes from a *foreign principle* is *necessitated*; that, on the contrary, is *spontaneous*, ^g the whole prin-

* Cicero de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. § 12. ^f Ethic. Nicom. lib. iii. cap. i. ^g Andron. Rhod. lib. iii. cap. i.

principle, or efficient cause whereof, is in the agent himself. 'Tis true, we call those machines *automata*, which contain, within themselves, the immediate *springs* of their *motion*; but this, like many other expressions, is not to be taken with a philosophical exactness. The immediate *spring* is internal; but the moving *cause* is without. Thus the true reason why a watch moves is, not the frame and structure of its parts, but the hand that winds it up. And it would be exactly the same as to the *will* of man, if that, like the wheels of a watch, mov'd not till it was first push'd on by some external *cause*, or by some other thing in the man that was so. It might, perhaps, be said in this case, that the man was not under compulsion, because the *will* itself was carried along by the stream; but if he acted *voluntarily*, 'tis certain his actions would be never the less *necessary* for that, and therefore not *spontaneous*. The addition of *reason* makes no difference, any more than it would in a clock; all the motions of which, after it was endued with a perceptive power, would be the sole effect of the weights hung upon it, as well as before. The concomitancy of *perception* or *understanding* alters nothing in the physical or efficient *cause* of action. 'Tis the opinion of Dr. Clarke^h, that the

^h *Remarks on a book entitled, a Philosophical Enquiry, &c.*

the *actions*, not of children only, but of every living creature, are in this sense all of them essentially *free*. Wherein he follows *Aristotle*ⁱ, whose words are, “ That *spontaneity* is common to children and all sorts of animal beings, but without a power of judging and deliberating.” Which is the foundation of what he says in another place, “ ^k That beasts, tho’ they have sense, are not capable of action ; forasmuch as *election*, according to him, is the principle or fountain of proper action.”

§ 9. THAT there must be such a thing somewhere as *liberty of action*, in opposition to *external* (by others call’d *physical*) *necessity* ; in *Cicero*’s^l language, a *necessity of fate*, or *eternal series of causes* ; may be demonstrated *ab absurdo*, that otherwise there would be no *agent* or *first mover* in the universe, but an eternal *progression* or *chain* of effects, without any *first cause of motion* ; which is a manifest contradiction : for if there be a *first mover*, he must have the original spring of his own activity in himself, and, by consequence, is not subject to any fatal or proper *necessity* ; the supposition of which would place the physical cause of its *motion*, or *action*, not in the being itself, but in that, whatsoever it were, which laid it under

ⁱ Ethic. Nicom. lib. iii. c. 2.

^k Lib. vi. c. 2.

^l De fato. § 9.

under a *necessity* of moving. That of *Plato*^m is undoubtedly true, that the beginning of *motion* must be from something that is *self-moved*; since all *nature* must, else, stand still, without any energy or force to put it in motion: tho' the inference he draws from hence, that the soul being *self-mov'd* is without beginning or ending, is as evidently false. The great stumbling-block here is, that we do not meet with any thing like a parallel, or resemblance, to this *freedom* of action in bodies; which is a most unreasonable prejudice. *Spirit* and *matter* being substances of a dissimilar nature, 'tis not to be wonder'd at if the motions of the one do not exactly quadrate in the manner of their production with the actions of the other. The *motions* of bodies are own'd to be *necessary*; but will it follow that the *actions* of the mind be *necessary* too; for no other reason but this, that if supposed to be *free*, there will be no similitude between the one and the other? On the contrary, that the *motions* of matter are all *necessary*, absolutely and externally *necessary*, a body at rest having no power to alter its present state, is instead of a thousand arguments to prove that the principle of *motion* is not in matter, and is therefore to be sought for in some immaterial being; unless we are resolv'd to believe

^m Phædon. & Cicero's Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. § 23.

believe against common sense, that tho' every particular body requires some extrinsic *cause* to put it in motion, yet the *source* or *cause* of corporeal *motion* is not to be searched after *out* of body, nor lodged in any other substance distinct from body ; that is, doth not, as a *principle*, or with respect to the *vis motrix*, reside in body, or in any thing besides, and so is a mere notion of the human mind. Upon this I argue, if *matter* cannot move itself, and there be no other being to move it, and yet no one makes it a question that it is mov'd ; then here is an *effect* without a *cause* ; which is apparently absurd. Let us pursue the clue of this reasoning, and it will unavoidably bring us to a *self-determining* cause, or to a being who possesses in himself the true spring and original of his actions. This is every whit as plain, as that all *action* is the effect or product of some adequate *power* or *cause* ; for so it would not be, were one thing acted by another, and that by another, and so on, *infinitely*, without any *first principle* of action, undetermin'd by any thing but its own thought and good pleasure. The inference from all this is, that the communication of *motion* in bodies is most perversly urged by way of objection against the *possibility* of any such *freedom* as stands oppos'd to *external necessity* ; since the *necessity* that bodies are under

under of moving, when they are moved, and of continuing quiescent, when nothing else moves them, proves, indeed, that bodies have no such thing as *self-motive* power; not that there is no such power any where existing; for it proves, with the conviction of a demonstration, that there is. One *free agent*, therefore, at least, must be admitted in the universe, independent of *external necessity* and *fate*. And, the truth is, instead of giving myself the trouble to prove this, I might have taken it for granted; inasmuch as the denial of it is avowed undistinguish'd atheism, or atheism disguised very thinly. A *first* and *supreme cause*, that hath something else *prior* and *superior* to it; a *self-existent* being, that *acts*, but is not *self-active*; *independent*, that is in all his actions *dependent*; and *almighty*, tho', if left to himself, he can *do nothing*; are ideas so inconsistent, that no man can seriously put them together: and whoever talks of a God, not meaning by that term, a self-existent, first, supreme, and almighty Being; a Being that hath the chain of causes in his hand, but is himself a link of the chain, tho' it may be a link of somewhat more importance than the rest; whoever, I say, talks at this rate, only plays with words, and *really* denies the existence of a God, while he *pretends* to grant it. Now, I must own, this essay was never intended

tended for the conversion of Atheists. It would be a senseless thing to hope any arguments whatsoever, in behalf of *human liberty*, should weigh much with those who will not be convinc'd by this glorious *spectacle* of nature, that there is an invifible *power* that made all things; nor hear the voice of *reason* and *conscience* within them proclaiming the same truth. I shall therefore take it from a concession, that there is *one* free Agent at least; one Being, whose actions are properly his own: and, if one, why not more? why may not a *self-determining power*, under certain restrictions, be communicated, as well as a power of *thinking* and *willing*? It lies upon those, who say it cannot, to shew the grounds of the difference. I cannot conclude this section better, than in the words of *Simplicius*. “^a They that deny to man a principle of *liberty*, betray their ignorance of the nature of a human soul, by taking away its *self-moving* power, in which consists the chief part of its essence.”

§ 10. *Internal necessity* is by ° *Simplicius* not illy defin'd, *that* which obliges all beings to act according to their *nature*; which as he adds, preserves *liberty* or *self-command*, instead of destroying it. Opposite to this *necessity*, is a *power of acting*, or
not

^a Simpl. in Epict. cap. 1.

° Ibid.

not acting, unforced by the weight of nature : not a bare *possibility*, or *physical* power of acting or not acting, for that is inseparable from the first kind of *liberty* ; but a *moral* power, that may be, and often is, reduced into *act*. This is true *liberty of indifference* ; and this is the *liberty* I plead for in human actions. My meaning is, that he who tells a lie, is not under the same *necessity* of doing it, that God is of observing the laws of truth. The murderer, in that inhuman action, is not urg'd by the same *necessity*, that makes a man in full possession of his senses and reason and who hath no motive or temptation, to put an end to his life to seek his own preservation. The man that robs on the highway, is not driven thereto after the same *irresistable* manner that a ravening beast is to seize the helpless prey, when he is hungry : there is not in the internal frame of *nature* any thing that renders these actions, as often as men commit them, in fact *inevitable*. Let man be compar'd with the beasts, which are govern'd by their appetites, and under an inward *impossibility* of acting in any one instance otherwise than they do ; it is certain this *liberty* is a privilege and a perfection, as it demands a good measure of reason : compare him with the supreme Being, who by the infinite perfection of his essence is perpetually determin'd

min'd to act conformably to the rules of the most consummate wisdom, holiness, and goodness, it must be confess'd an imperfection, and to argue the weakness of human reason.

§ 11. YET still this I hold to, that *liberty of indifference*, in opposition to a *necessary* determination to judge and act *wrong*, is a perfection; because, were it not so, as the enquirer doth in effect assert it is not ^P, it would be a greater perfection to judge and act as we do, tho' wrong, and in a manner destructive of our own happiness, and the peace of society, than to have been able at the same time, and in the same circumstances, to judge and act right. I readily own, that this *liberty* would be no way desirable by being supposed to lie under a happy *necessity*, a *necessity* caused by the bright and overpowering evidence of reason, together with the rectitude of their own inclinations of passing none but right judgments, and exerting none but right volitions. But this is not our case; the present world knows no such happy state: melancholy experience teaches us, that we are capable of erroneous judgments, and irregular actions, without number; and this being so, I make no scruple to affirm, what I look upon as next to self-evident, that it is much better, and

^P Philosophical Enquiry, p. 62, &c.

and an instance of greater perfection, to be able to forbear running into such judgments and actions, than to be *necessarily carried* to them. Nor does all that the forecited *author* offers, prove the contrary to this; and not disproving this, disproves not any thing that the patrons of *liberty* are concerned to defend; and is therefore but one grand impertinence of several pages in length. What is fact, is fact, on either supposition of *liberty* or *necessity*; let us grant the enquirer's *necessity*, yet the errors of mankind, in judgment or practice, are not immediately annihilated; but subsist still, *materially* considered, tho', as to their *formal nature*, there be a difference. The enquirer himself allows me more than I want, when he mentions *wrong* actions, and *absurdities* in notion: ^a what then is gain'd by this *necessity*? why, we have the comfort to know that we are *necessitated* to judge or act wrong by an *appearance* of reason; and cannot act contrary to such an appearance. But since it can be only a *fallacious* appearance of reason that leads to any thing *unreasonable*, and this appearance might, with a little more care, be easily seen through; undoubtedly a power to suspend judging or acting the *wrong* way, till reason herself appears to direct us into the *right*, is preferrable to the contrary *necessity*. 'Tis likewise a mere jest, when

^a Pag. 56.

men execute the commands of their worst passions, and most deprav'd inclinations, act a malicious, cruel, ungrateful, perfidious part, to call this *following of reason*. Reason disapproves and condemns all such actions, men are conscious that it does so, and confess it, by condemning themselves, when they come to reflect on what they have done. --- By this time, I am apt to think, the distinction of *external* and *internal* necessity, and of *liberty*, as oppos'd to the one or other of these, is sufficiently cleared.

§ 12. IN the preface to the *enquiry*, we meet with a distinction somewhat like this now explain'd; between *moral* and *mechanical* necessity. By *moral* necessity, the *author* means, that man, who is an intelligent and sensible being, is determin'd by his reason and his senses; for this is the *necessity* he undertakes to defend; while he denies man to be subject to such a *necessity* as is in clocks and watches, which for want of sensation and intelligence are subject to an *absolute, physical, or mechanical* necessity. My remark here is, that if the soul be a *system, of matter*, and all its thoughts and volitions so many intestine motions and collisions of the parts of this system, (which is known to be that gentleman's opinion, who writ the *philosophical enquiry*, and of the rest of that honourable tribe) there can be

no room for this distinction, in which he takes refuge ; and he must abandon the notion of *physical* as well as *moral* freedom. A *mechanical* necessity, as oppos'd to *moral*, is, I take it, a *necessity* arising from *matter* and *motion*: a clock, or any other such machine, moves only when it is moved, and then cannot but move ; this is *absolute mechanical necessity*. And in case reason be no more than a peculiar *mode* of motion, a being determined by reason, is as much determined by motion ; that is, is as *mechanically* determin'd, as a clock or a watch : unless it be pretended, that though reason be no more than the motion of the parts of matter ; yet *reason*, which is one kind of motion, doth not give beginning to *volition*, which is another kind of motion, *as motion*, but *as reason*. Be it so ; then I say, that something besides *motion* may give beginning to *motion* ; and by parity of reason, an *immaterial being* may move matter ; for where's the mighty difference between *motion's* being produc'd by an *immaterial being*, and its being generated by a *material being* in *motion*, not *as a material being*, nor *as a material being in motion*, but *as a material being endued with reason* ? When a rational being is determin'd by his reason, there is either no more in it than this, that one *motion* generates another ; or there is :

if the *first*, then here is absolute *mechanical* necessity; just as the motion of a clock would be not a whit the less *mechanical*, were the weight conscious to its own power of moving the clock, and the wheels did *will* to move as they are obliged to move by the weight: if the *latter*; then *local motion* may proceed from an immaterial principle; from a mere *thought*, or *volition*, or *impulse* of a mind. Nay, and since we are invincibly conscious, that the relation of *reason* and *volition* is not the relation of two *motions*, but of two things entirely distinct from motion; and the relation between *volition* and *corporeal* motion, is not the relation of motion and *motion*, but of *volition* and *motion*; it follows, that these operations of *thinking* and *willing* are not *material*, and by consequence, that the being they belong to, is not a *system of matter*. But this by the way. Having stated the *notion* of *liberty*, and shewn *what* that *liberty* is I aim to prove.

§ 13. I ADVANCE in the next place, to *demonstrate* that *man* is a *free agent*, in the sense before explained: so *free* as to be able to *do* many of the actions he *forbears*; and to *forbear* many of the actions he does: not only *physically*, but *morally* able; being privileg'd from the sway of an internal, as well as external *necessity*. Had we not a power over our own actions, it would fol-

follow, saith *Cicero* ^r, "That neither commendations nor reproaches, rewards or punishments, would have any just foundation". But in regard a plausible reply may be made to this argument, and we want not for others that are more unexceptionable, I shall not insist upon it; for as to the *wisdom* of human rewards and punishments, it may be said, that they answer their ends, if they work *necessarily* as much as they would do if men were free agents. *Rorarius* ^r tells us, he saw two wolves hanging on a gibbet in the dutchy of *Fu-liers*; and observes, that it made a greater impression on the other wolves, than the mark of a red-hot iron, to deter thieves from stealing. He likewise saith, that in *Africa* it is usual to nail lions to a cross, in order to terrify those of the same species. And what more common than for a dog to leave faults for which he is beaten? So that these methods are made use of as weights in a ballance, to turn it this way or that: and what *Myfis* saith in *Terence* ^t, is literally

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^r De fato.

^r *Bayle's Dictionary*, Article *Rorarius*. I find the author of the *Philosophical Enquiry* applies the same observation to the same purpose; but this I did not know till some years after I noted it, and put it to this use in reading the article *Rorarius* in *Bayle's Dictionary*; from whence accordingly I quote it, and not from *Rorarius* himself, as the Enquirer does.

^t *Andria*, Act. 1. sc. 5. Dum in dubio est animus, paulo momento huc illuc impellitur.

rally true of man, in case he be only a piece of corporeal or intellectual *mechanism*. "While the mind is in doubt, the most inconsiderable addition of weight inclines it to either side." And as to the *justice* of punishments, on supposition of the *necessity* of human actions, 'tis easily accounted for, by saying, that the same *necessity* that is pleaded by the criminal for committing a fault, the magistrate, or any one else, hath a right to plead for punishing it. He that judges, and he that is judged, are alike the servants of *fate*.^u Therefore *Zeno*, when his slave was caught in a piece of theft, and argued *ad hominem*, that it was his *fate* to steal; without going off from his own principles, replies, "Very true, thou wast *fated* to play the rogue, and I am *fated* to see thee whipp'd for it."^w To prevent all cavils therefore, I shall argue from two considerations which cannot be so easily evaded: one of them taken from the *perfections* of *God*; the other from every man's own *conscience*.

§ 14. 1. *God* being infinitely *just*, cannot punish actions which are not *deserving* of punishment; as it is certain none of those actions can be which proceed from *necessity*. Being infinitely *wise* and *good*, if he interwove in the contexture of human nature,

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^u Tatian. Orat. ad Græc. § 11. ^w Diog. Laert. vit. Zen.

a necessity of acting one way ; it would be that way which is most agreeable to reason, most for the benefit of mankind, and most consonant to his own will. That mankind act irregularly in a thousand instances, or so as to violate the laws of reason, religion, and the civil society, is a matter of fact not to be disputed : the only question is, whether they can *avoid* acting in this manner ? grant me that they can, and I have gain'd my point ; since they will then do what they have a power to forbear : deny it, and you are obliged to hold, that the *first* cause is the *source* of *all* evil, *i. e.* that sin and folly are the *necessary* productions of infinite goodness and wisdom, which is a manifest contradiction. “ The whole system
“ of the universe, says a late * writer, is the
“ care of God ; and all other inferior beings
“ must be subordinate to the interest of
“ this great one ; and all contribute, in
“ their several stations and actions, to bring
“ about at last the grand purposes of his
“ Providence.” But will he pretend to say, that lying, fraud, intemperance, inhumanity, oppression, and the like practices, have in their nature a tendency to promote the good of intelligent beings ; and cannot therefore, in the order of causes, be dispensed with

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by

* The Author of the *British Journal* in 1722, under the Name of *Diogenes*.

by him who guides the whole design? this were to make these things *good*, and not *evil*, in opposition to universal reason and experience. Or will any one contend, that particular societies, and consequently the general system which comprehends them all, would not enjoy more harmony, peace and happiness, if they who compose them were universally just, temperate, grateful, kind and beneficent? and why then are they not all these, but too often the direct contrary? The common answer, that man being at present in a state of *trial* for the happiness of a future life, is therefore *left* to his *liberty* to do good or evil, is a plain and rational solution of the difficulty: whereas the opinion that men are *inevitably* betray'd into all these mischiefs by a concatenation of causes, overthrows at once the idea of an *eternal mind*, and of *moral* perfections; establishing in their stead a blind unintelligent matter, as the original of all things. Did we see an *universal* regularity and consistency in the actions of rational creatures; were they *all* uniformly virtuous, conducted by reason, and levelled at one certain end, the common interest and welfare of the whole; there might be then some little colour for doubt, whether they were not under a *necessity*, like that which retains the heavenly bodies in their several courses, which

which they perform with an amazing order and constancy, one age after another. But, for certain; *wisdom* cannot be the spring of an *unequal*, *freakish* and *contradictory* conduct: the origin of all *good* can never *necessitate* his creatures to do *evil*. Nor can the patrons of this opinion escape by saying, that God himself is a *necessary* agent; that he could not but create man with an invincible bias to transgress his laws, and cannot but punish him for transgressing them, tho' without any fault of his. For whence should this *necessity* arise? not from any thing *without* him, because he would not be then the *first* and *independent* Being; not from his *own nature*, which, containing in itself the most perfect wisdom, justice and goodness, cannot, without the most evident absurdity, be supposed forcing him to act in direct opposition to all these perfections.

§ 15. 2. THERE is that in every man which we call * *conscience*; which *approves* him for having done an honest, generous, or benevolent action, and which *checks* him in the commission of an ill action, *reproaches* him having done it, fills him with secret *shame*, with *bitter* reflections, with smarting *anguish*, and foreboding *fears*: this conscience, *natural* to all, is an incontestible argument
of

* Vid. Clement. Homil. 14. § 4. Εἰ γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν, &c.

of the same *liberty* : for what does all this signify less than a sense or consciousness not to be suppress'd, of his being the *free author* of his actions, and justly *accountable* for the good or evil which is in them. This *judgment*, we pass upon our *own* actions, and the actions of *others*, is *natural* and *unavoidable* ; 'tis therefore the *voice* of the *author* of our *frame*, by which he tells us we are *free* and *accountable*, proper subjects of praise or blame, and consequently of reward or punishment. When we have resisted a strong temptation of interest or pleasure, which would have seduced us to fraud or injustice, we *naturally approve* ourselves, and look upon ourselves as *approved* of *God*, and qualified for his favour ; but were we not *free*, we could no more *reasonably* thus approve ourselves, or esteem ourselves as approv'd of *God*, for being in this good temper, and acting with integrity and benevolence, than for being, without any care of our own, in a good *state* of *health*, and endow'd with a happy *vigour* of *mind* and *body*. We should be *delighted* with it as a happiness, and are hereby qualified to do more good ; but do not *approve* ourselves for it, or think ourselves ever the more *qualified* for the approbation or reward of the Deity. Do not mankind agree in distinguishing between *natural* endowments, and *acquired*

quired moral excellencies? but what room for this distinction, and the different regards paid to these, if both were alike the *necessary* result of our constitution, and the circumstances wherein God had placed us; and justice, mercy, or piety were as *intirely* the gifts of God, as strength of body, or penetration of mind? On the other hand, when we have been guilty of actions of *known* falshood, ingratitude, treachery, inhumanity, profaneness, and the like, and coolly reflect upon them; we *naturally* and *necessarily* reproach and condemn ourselves, and apprehend a wise and righteous God will condemn us; we wish we had not done these actions, and resolve for the future to forbear them. These are the *natural* sentiments of every mind not abandon'd to vice, coolly reflecting on actions of this kind; but were we conscious to ourselves, and were this the real truth, that in such circumstances we could not avoid thinking and acting as we did, and could not before avoid these circumstances, any more than a mad man in the height of distraction; who would condemn himself for any thing he had thought or done, and who reasonably fear the displeasure and condemnation of a wise and just God, who knew our frame, and who knew himself to be the real author of all the dispositions and actions *necessarily* arising

arising out of the constitution he had form'd us with, and the circumstances wherein he had placed us? *Repentance* and *self-condemnation* evidently and necessarily suppose we *could* have acted otherwise. Since therefore these are the *natural* sentiments and judgments of our minds upon our own actions, and we thus *naturally judge* of the actions and characters of others; since these sentiments and these judgments are in a greater or less degree *natural* to mankind, and unavoidably form'd and entertain'd by them; either the author of the human frame, by our make, *necessarily* determines us to judge *falsely* of actions and characters, and then farewell to all *certainty* in *speculative* truths, as well as *moral*; or we are *free*, capable of omitting the good actions we practise, of doing the ill actions we forbear, or abstaining from the vices we indulge. We as *naturally approve* and *condemn* ourselves as the proper authors of our good or ill actions, as we assent to the proportions of numbers, or of lines and figures. Could mankind be *universally* deceiv'd in this *natural, universal, moral* judgment of themselves and their actions, they might be deceived in the *clear-est* determinations of their reason in all other cases. 'Tis no more unworthy our Maker, or inconsistent with his perfections, to determine us to judge *falsely* in *speculative*, than in

in *moral* propositions ; and all truth and certainty must then be given up for a gloomy, restless scepticism.

IF it should be said, that there is no need of granting more than a *freedom* of the *first* kind, or a *self-motive* power, to take away the force of these arguments : I answer, this is evidently a mistake ; since, upon this supposition, the continued aversion of the mind from God and goodness, in the worst of mankind, would be as innocent as the desire of happiness, because equally *necessary*. Yea, this notion would throw the blame of all the evil which is done in the world on God, who, in the constitution of men has made it morally impossible, and could therefore never design they should act otherwise than they do. Let ten thousand beings be fram'd exactly alike, and be put into the same circumstances, both inward and outward ; if they have no more than a liberty of *spontaneity*, it is certain they will all act after the same manner. Blame not therefore a thief for taking away your money, accuse him not of injustice ; for he may say, that he has done no more than you yourself, than any man, than any being in the universe, if fram'd as he was by God, by nature, and education, and situated like him, would have done.

§ 16. THIS being so, I know not how to subscribe to what * Dr. Clarke says, “ That
 “ the difference between men and beasts is
 “ only this, that in man *physical* liberty is
 “ join’d with a sense, or consciousness of
 “ *moral* good and evil, and is therefore
 “ eminently called *liberty*. In beasts the
 “ same *physical* liberty, or self-moving power,
 “ is wholly separate from a sense, or con-
 “ sciousness, or capacity of judging of *moral*
 “ good or evil, and is vulgarly called *spon-*
 “ *taneity*. In children the same *physical* li-
 “ berty always is from the very beginning ;
 “ and in proportion as they increase in age,
 “ and in capacity of judging, they grow con-
 “ tinually in degree not more *free*, but *moral*
 “ agents.” On the contrary, I beg leave to
 say, that the *whole* difference between men
 and beasts is not a *mere* consciousness of *moral*
 good and evil, which these latter want, and
 the other have ; but that the chief difference
 lies herein, that the *will* being join’d in men
 with a *reasoning faculty*, is capable hereby of
 determining itself different ways in every
 circumstance of life, which it is morally im-
 possible for the soul of a brute (if brutes
 have souls) to do. The only difference be-
 tween children, and those come to years of
 understanding, is not, that these last have a
 better capacity of judging than the former,
 but

* Remarks on Philos. Enquiry, &c. pag. 27, 28.

but they are likewise *more free*; I mean in opposition to *internal necessity*. This *liberty* increases in proportion to the capacity of judging for some time; but as this capacity approaches to perfection, supposing the virtuous disposition of the mind to improve with its knowledge, this *liberty* lessens again; the degree of it being mostly regulated by the *proportion* there is between the *reason* and the *inclinations* of the soul.

§ 17. HAVING stated the notion of *liberty*, and prov'd man to be a *free agent*, it remains that I consider the principal objections and difficulties attending this subject. And the

First, Is from *Hobbs*, and *Spinoza*, and affects the possibility of *liberty*. * “ Every effect is produced by some cause, which for this very reason, that it is *sufficient* to produce the effect, produces it *necessarily*; inasmuch as supposing it not actually to have produced it, it would not have been sufficient. Now the *will* is determined by some *external* cause, which cause is sufficient, and does therefore *necessarily* and inevitably determine it.” But if this be not *begging the question*, 'tis impossible there should be any such thing; for who among the asserters of the *freedom* of the *will*, was
ever

* See also a good answer to this objection in an Essay towards demonstrating the immateriality and free agency, &c. c. 11. § 12, 13, 14.

ever so unadvised as to acknowledge, that the *will* is *perpetually determin'd* by *external* causes? on the contrary, ask any of them, and they will tell you, that this faculty *determines itself* by a power originally inherent in it. With regard to the voluntary motions of the mind, we are not to look for an external *cause*; it being the nature of these to be in our own power. Nor must it be therefore said that they are without a cause; for the *cause* is no other than the *nature* of the agent. These are the words of * *Cicero*, who has likewise something relating to the notion of a *cause* which is well worth quoting: “ That is the true *cause* of a thing,
“ which *efficaciously* produces it, as a wound
“ of death or indigestion of a disease; and
“ therefore this term is not to be so explain'd,
“ as if whatever was *antecedent* to any thing
“ was its *cause*; *sed quod efficienter antecede-*
“ *dat*, but what *efficaciously precedes* it.” It may be previously requisite, that there be some circumstances accompanying the action to engage the consent of the *will*; notwithstanding which, it continues true, that the *will* is not *physically* mov'd by them, but *freely moves itself* in view of them. Or in case, for argument's sake, we should grant them what they *will* never be able to prove, that the *will* is determined by something

* Cic. de Fato, § 11, & 15.

thing from without; will it from hence follow, that it is irresistibly determin'd? not at all: for tho' in regard of beings who have not a *self-motive* power, every cause which is sufficient to impel them, must *necessarily* impel them as often as it is exerted; (as if I had strength to lift any given weight, and made trial of my strength for that very end, the weight will unavoidably be remov'd out of its place) yet from instances of this nature to infer the *necessity* of the *will's* following the impulse of every cause, which is sufficient to put it in action, is not less absurd, than if we should say, that because a weaker man is able to lift or throw a stronger than himself, provided the stronger man will make no resistance, he can therefore do the same, tho' the stronger made all the opposition in his power. The *will* has this *resisting* power, by which it can prevent the efficacy of those causes which (I at present deny not) would determine it, on condition the *will* would suffer itself to be determined by them.

§ 18. *Obj. 2.* IT is objected, the *will* must yield itself to the *greatest appearing good*; because otherwise it would embrace *evil as evil*, which is utterly impossible^a: And how an object shall appear, whether

^a See also a good answer to this objection in the Essay just quoted. c. II. § 15, and fol.

good or bad, better or worse, is not at the pleasure of the *will*, which must take things just as they are offered by the understanding : and tho' the ^b poet makes *Medea* say,

- - - *video meliora, proboque ;*
Deteriora sequor. - - -

^c others will tell you, *Omnis peccans est ignorans* : the sinner is always ignorant of the evil of what he does. The more common way of expressing the objection is this : that the *will* in all its determinations necessarily follows the ultimate dictate of the practical *understanding*. To this I shall not answer, by assuming ^d Mr. *Locke's* opinion, that the *will* is always determined by the *most pressing uneasiness*, and not by the appearance of the greatest good ; for did this always hold true, there could be no such thing as *voluntary* martyrdom. The desire of ease, and the uneasiness created by its absence, or rather by the presence of pain, would not fail to determine the *will* to whatever expedients would deliver the sufferers from their torments, even tho' the only method should be the abjuration of their religion. Whereas this is oppos'd by matter of fact ; many having chearfully given their bodies to be burnt, and sealed their

^b Ovid. Met. l. 7.
c. 17, & 18.
c. 21. § 31.

^c Vid. Arrian. Epietet. l. 1.
^d Essay on Hum. Underst. b. 2.

their faith with their blood: in which glorious conflict, that which gave them this courage was not *uneasiness* of any kind, but the *joy* they felt arising in themselves from the assured hope and expectation of a blessed immortality. Neither shall I reply, as some do, that what is usually called the *last dictate* of the understanding, is in truth no other than an act of the *will*, wherein I cannot at present agree with them. There are *three* acts of the mind as conversant about human actions; the *first* when it pronounces concerning an action that it is a *proper* means for the attainment of such or such an end: the *next*, that upon the *whole* 'tis an action which *ought* to be done: or *lastly*, it saith, *let this action be done*. The *two former* are acts of the *understanding*, the *last* of the *will*. What is usually called the *last dictate* of the understanding, to me appears to be nothing else but *perception*, either distinct or confused, brighter or more obscure, and therefore plainly an operation of the understanding; tho' that it is final and directory, or that the mind rests satisfied in it, is generally chargeable on the *will*, which has a power to put the understanding on a closer view of things than men commonly content themselves with. And this indeed seems to be the original cause of mens confounding these two facul-

ties, attributing to one what belongs to the other.

I AS little like Bishop ^c King's hypothesis, *Potentia activæ ea natura est quæ obiectum actu suo sibi conveniens, i. e. bonum efficiat, &c.* that the nature of an *active* power is such, as by singling out any thing for its object, by the *very act* to make it convenient for it, or good : for in this case the *goodness* of the object does not *precede* the act of *election* ; but the *election* is the *efficient* or original of the goodness which is in the *object* : that is, a thing *pleases*, because it is *chosen* ; not *chosen*, because it *pleases*. Not to strike at the foundation of this notion, by shewing, that things are good or evil independently of the *will* ; its absurdity is from hence apparent, that admitting the truth of the assertion, there can be no such thing as a *wrong* choice ; forasmuch as the choice of any thing whatsoever, *creates* a goodness where it was not before. That author indeed saith, " Who-
 " ever knowingly chooses what he cannot
 " enjoy, or what will occasion unnecessary
 " trouble to himself or another, may be
 " reckoned to have made an unwise elec-
 " tion." This is very true in itself, because that which cannot be enjoy'd, is not good to be chosen ; and that which has evil consequences, which more than ballance the fore-
 going

^c De origine mali. pag. 118, 145, 147.

going pleasure, is really evil, and this antecedently to the election of the *will*. But tho' this be true in itself, it is not so upon our author's supposition ; which makes things to be good, not in *themselves*, but because they are *will'd* : and when he comes afterward to assign the causes of improper elections, he manifestly abandons his first position, and brings the matter back to the common way of solution.

§ 19. NOT approving these answers, I shall offer some other considerations to remove the difficulty. I say therefore,

1. IT is *not true*, that in every action a man performs, he has *two goods* in view ; the *greatest* of which, according to the present appearance, he *chooses*, and rejects the *least*. But oftentimes appetite and inclination lean towards a certain particular, and this the man makes choice of without farther deliberation ; whereas he ought to have compar'd it with other goods which are greater, and with which it might have been found inconsistent. This it was possible for him to have done, and by this means to have avoided the action. The inclination of the sensualist is to his bottle, and his bottle-companions ; and these, without any farther thought of the matter, he takes the first opportunity to enjoy, and comes off with the loss of his senses : when, had he duly consider'd

der'd the hazard he ran of depriving himself of far better and more lasting pleasures, he might have prevented this excess. You will be apt to interpose here, that he could not make a comparison of the pleasures of a debauch, with the advantages of sobriety, without thinking of both. He could not think of them but one of these two ways; either by their presenting themselves to his mind, without seeking for them; or by his willing to think of them: the former was not in his power, as every body must own; nor the latter, because he could not will to think of them, but he must have actually thought of them before. I answer, there may be a general reluctance of conscience not grounded in particular thoughts; and were this reluctance more heeded, it would quickly conduct a man into a more close and serious consideration of the matter. And even when a person makes not the least reflection upon the nature of the action, it may be his own fault that he does not. Sometimes, perhaps often in his life, he has had thoughts of God, and of another world, pressing into his mind; which thoughts, had he entertained and pursued them as he might have done, would have raised his passions in respect of *moral* good and evil; and the passions once raised, are a mighty help to the memory. Did a man carry about with him an
awful

awful habitual sense of God and eternity; the thought would return upon every occasion, and be a restraint from many actions, upon which, for want of this thought, he is not afraid to venture.

2. IN actions where a *comparison* is made between two goods, the will is not *necessarily* determined to the *choice* of that which appears to be the *greater*. Either,

1. BECAUSE tho' it has the appearance of the greater good at *present*; yet my mind tells me, that a *farther* examination of it might possibly discover the contrary; so that the *will* is not forced upon it. Or,

2. BECAUSE the *greater* good is *absent*, and so does not kindle the desire to the same degree as the *lesser*, which is *present*, and which the man flatters himself will not interfere with the acquisition of the greater. In short, the inclination to a *lesser* good because *present*, and a presumptuous *hope* that it will not disappoint him of the greater; and at the same time the idea of the *greater* good, and a consciousness that if the matter were thoroughly search'd into, the lesser might prove irreconcilable with the greater; do upon the whole leave the *will* a power of declaring on either side: so that, in such instances, there is not what we can properly call an *ultimate dictate* of the *understanding*;

but rather two cotemporary views, which leave the *will* in suspense.

3. MAN is made up of *two* parts, an *animal* and a *rational*; each of which has its desires and propensions apart to itself. Those belonging to the former are generally the most vehement and importunate, and frequently prevail with the *will* to act in defiance of reason, which, at the very instant we close with an object, enters its protest against it, and warns us of the ill consequences that will *probably* attend the choice. I say, *probably*; because a *certain* knowledge or persuasion, that misery will *unavoidably* follow that particular choice, seems to put it out of our power to make it. Nor do we thus *will evil as evil*; for tho' the *will* be on the side of the lesser good, yet it is not consider'd as the lesser good, or for its own sake; but because of the strong and furious inclination which we experience in ourselves towards that good. This inclination is what, *pro hic & nunc*, we are not able to hinder, tho' it be in our power to refuse the gratification of it. This is much the same with Mr. Locke's *uneasiness*. A man finds himself uneasy in the absence of those sensual objects, to which by nature or habit he is passionately inclin'd; as there is likewise a great deal of uneasiness in crossing his desires; which is the reason that men are too often governed by lust
and

and appetite, in opposition to the plain dictates of the mind. Yet tho' *uneasiness* does often influence the *will* in its choice, it has not *always* the same effect: since if this were so, there would be no examples of actions done counter to inclination; which on the contrary, is the case of every good man; that which puts the *emphasis* on this virtue, being the opposition it meets with from his inclinations. And that this *uneasiness* does not *always* determine the *will*, is a good argument, that when it does, it is not *necessarily*. Upon the whole, we are capable of *two* sorts of pleasures; the pleasures of *right acting*, and the pleasures of *indulging* to the *appetites* and *passions* of the *animal* life: either of these pleasures are a *sufficient* motive to action, since the *will* can *determine itself* in favour of either: that when they come in *competition*, the *will* prefers the pleasure of indulged appetite and passion, to the pleasures of right acting, and the reward and happiness consequent upon it, is intirely owing to itself, *because* it *will*. To ask a *good justifying* reason for this *wrong* choice, is to ask what is impossible to be given. The *physical cause* of the wrong choice and action is the *will*, the *motive* to it is the sensual pleasure or indulgence. 'Tis our *fault* when we thus determine and choose wrong; since it is a matter of daily experience and observation,

vation, that we *can*, and often *do*, determine otherwise ; and see it done by others in great numbers, by all the wise and good.

§ 20. *Obj.* 3. WE are called upon to reconcile the divine *prescience* with *human liberty* ; to get clear of which difficulty, some have disown'd *one* of these, some the *other*. Some have contended for God's *foreknowledge* of human actions ; but at once to obviate all objections, have said, that there is nothing of *contingency* in them. Others aver, that the *contingency* of human actions is *essential* to the *morality* of them ; but at the same time judging it a *contradiction*, that any action should be *free* which God *certainly* foreknows, have therefore denied a *certain foreknowledge* of future *contingencies*. These, to me, seem both of them extremes, and do not untie but cut the knot. The truth lying in the middle between them, involves us in these two difficulties :

1. How the actions of mankind can be *free*, on supposition God *foreknows* them ?

2 How it is *possible* God should *foreknow* them, supposing they are *free* ?

1. How actions *certainly foreknown* by God can be *free* ? Does not *divine prescience* *necessitate* the existence of its object ? My answer is, that the knowledge of things *future* differs not in this respect from the

knowledge of things *past*, or *present*. For, as things must be *past* in order to their being known to be *past*, and *present* e're they can be known to be *present*; so they must be *future* before they can be *foreknown* as such. Things are not *future* because they are *foreknown*, but *foreknown* because *future*. Knowledge, which is an *immanent* act, can have no proper direct influence upon things *external* and *future*. And if we narrowly examine the nature of this objection against *liberty*, we shall find it to be no way lessen'd in its force, by laying aside the supposition of any such thing as *prescience*, as thus: the action I did the last minute, or that I shall do the next, was *future* from all eternity; and what was from eternity *future*, seems to be *fix'd* and *immutable* in the train of events, and is really as much so as if *foreknown*. The same answer will serve both, that an action being in its nature *contingent*, the *future* and *foreknowledge* of it must be conformable to its nature. Knowledge must regard the *real* nature of things known: it has been prov'd, that human actions are *free*; they must therefore, if *foreknown*, be *foreknown* as *free*: for to know an action to be what it is not, is a contradiction, 'tis not knowledge but mistake; because it is future and foreknown, it *will* be *certainly*,
but

but not *necessarily*; because, being *contingent*, it *might not* have been future, and consequently not foreknown. It is the free determination of the *will* in time, that is the *ground* of its being future from eternity. The same answer may be applied to a like way of reasoning quoted from *Chrysippus* by ^f *Cicero*, that every *axiom* or proposition relating to the *future* is *true* or *false*; and that whatever is *true* must be *certain*; and that whatever is *certain* must be *necessary*, which will introduce *necessity* and *fate*. This, I say, is but a different representation of the same objection, and is to be answered after the same manner as that before. Let me, however, add, that if *foreknowledge* and *certainly*, in relation to future actions, *really* prov'd *necessity*, we must give up *certainly* and *foreknowledge*; and if a *free* action be really impossible to be foreknown, 'tis no more a diminution of the divine *omniscience* not to know what is *impossible* to be *known*, than of his *omnipotence* not to work *contradictions*, which are in truth nothing, no objects of power.

2. SUPPOSING the *freedom* of human actions, how can God *certainly* *foreknow* them? A *satisfactory* account of this is, I doubt, a thing to be despair'd of. The theory seems to exceed the reach of human under-

^f De Fato. § 10.

understanding, and therefore [§] *Carneades* would say, that *Apollo* himself could not foretel things *future*, unless they were such whose *causes* were so contain'd in the nature of things, that it was necessary they should be ; and he, upon the same account, denied that things *past*, of which there were no signs or footsteps left, were known to this fortune-telling god. Now, tho' I can easily consent that *Apollo* should be excluded from this super-eminent perfection of knowing and predicting future *contingencies* ; I must needs assert it as the glory of the *true God*, whose understanding being *infinite*, is infinitely above our comprehension, and may have ways of knowing things wholly inconceivable by us.

§ 21. I SHALL close this dissertation of *human freedom* with an observation, that the doctrine of *fate* is commonly the *refuge* of the *slothful* and the *vicious*. --- To be virtuous and wise requires no little pains ; to save which, men have thought of a shorter way, and thrown all upon *fate* ; proceeding either from a *concatenation of causes*, or an *unconditional decree* of God : and while they swim down the lazy stream of ease and pleasure, would fain persuade themselves that they are carried along by the resistless torrent of *necessity*. The ancient
philo-

§ Ap. Cicer. de Fato. § 14.

^h *philosophers* were therefore wont to call this *αργὸς λόγος*, the *idle reason*; because, if pursued, it would benumb all the faculties, and introduce an absolute torpor and indolence into human life. But people are wiser than to have any regard to *this reason* in their common affairs; and when the safety or interest of the body are visibly concerned: and have we not upon this sufficient ground to question them, why they do not plead *fate* here as well as in other cases, and starve themselves, &c. out of *necessity*, as well as suffer themselves to be the fools or knaves of *fate*? ⁱ *Chrysippus's* distinction will not save them, of things *simple* and *copulate*, or *confatalia*. They make use of a physician for their health, because one is as *fatal* as the other; and so they would have used the means leading to virtue and wisdom, if they had been *fated* to be wise and virtuous. This excuse of theirs is abundantly expos'd, by only taking notice of the lucky *concurrence* of their *fate* and their *inclination*. Are they threatned with a mortal distemper? the physician is immediately sent for, and all his prescriptions are submitted to, however nauseous and unacceptable. The health and peace of their minds are in equal danger; and the instruction of good books, a habit of thinking

^h Vide Cicer. de Fato. § 12. ⁱ Ibid. § 13.

ing and meditation, and the exercises of virtue and religion, much more infallible cures than any *recipes* of the doctor, and yet are neglected. Their liquor is poison'd, and they refrain drinking: the pleasures of sin kill as effectually, and more terribly, and yet they will not deny themselves. Their *reason* is of considerable service to them in the concerns of a corruptible body, and a perishing life; but of none at all to make them mind a more important interest, and to direct them in the management of it. All this shows that their *fate* is nothing else but their *sloth* and *sensuality*, their love of the body and the world; and that these men might be, if they would, what ^k *Tatian* says concerning the *christians*, *εὐμαρτυροῦντες ἀνώτεροι*, superior to their *fate*.

^k Tatian. Orat. ad Græcos, § 4.



Of the same kind
the first is the most common
and the second is the most
rare. The third is the most
valuable and the fourth is the
most common. The fifth is the
most rare and the sixth is the
most valuable.

1

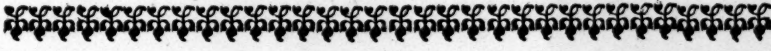
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3

A
DISCOURSE
ON THE
TERMS
OF
Christian Communion.

ROM. XV. 7.

*Receive ye one another, as Christ also received
us, to the glory of God.*



VOL. IV.

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Christian Communion.

THE subject here treated being of great and common importance, the author thought himself not only justified, but obliged to consider it with the utmost freedom and impartiality. And having done so, does now beg leave to lay the result of his enquiries before the public, in the following conclusions.

I. IN *religion*, every man hath a natural right to examine and judge for himself; and, in all things not inconsistent with the good of society, to follow that judgment. The case is so plain, that nothing would have been less disputed than this *right of private judgment*, had not some men, to serve

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the

the interest of a party, or to promote their secular views, employ'd all their art to perplex and darken the subject. God hath endowed every man, to whom he hath given a common measure of reason, with a *capacity* of judging concerning those things on which his *religious* conduct, and, in consequence of that, his future *happiness* depends. And a *capacity*, in this case, infers a *right*; and a *right* an *obligation*, without being accountable to any but God himself for the use of it, unless where it interferes with the common rights of mankind: it is the gift of God, not of my fellow-creatures, who have therefore no just pretence to disturb me in the enjoyment of it. God alone is judge of the degree of my *capacity*, and of my *integrity* in the application and improvement I make of it; and to him alone I am to answer for my management. This is the *apostle Paul's* argument, ^a *Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up; for God is able to make him stand.* “ Is it handsome or just to
“ speak evil of the servant of another per-
“ son, for something which his master, per-
“ haps, sees reason to approve? and where-
“ as you may be ready to fancy that all
“ who do not think as you do, can have
“ no

^a Rom. xiv. 4.

“ no firm standing in the christian church,
 “ you are quite mistaken; since, if the
 “ persons you thus condemn are guilty of
 “ no greater misdemeanor than this, of
 “ judging for themselves, tho’ the conse-
 “ quence should be their *mistaking* in some
 “ things, God will preserve them from
 “ falling into *destructive errors*; and, pro-
 “ vided they continue in their integrity,
 “ will make them to stand in the final
 “ judgment.” The same reasoning is pur-
 sued in the 12th verse of that chapter;
So then, every one of us shall give an account
of himself to God. And what more equita-
 ble, than that every man should be left to
 determine concerning his own actions, when
 every man must give an account of them to
 God, and not another for him?

It cannot, indeed, be doubted, that he
 who bestowed this *right* of private judg-
 ment might, if he saw fit, over-rule, or even
 set aside the exercise of it: but the question
 is, *hath he done it?* it is by no means *self-*
evident that he hath. Nay, there lies a
 strong presumption against it; whether you
 suppose him to have done it by the perpe-
 tual residence of a spirit of *infallibility* in
 the church, which renders the exercise of
 all *judgment* (properly so call’d) whether
 private or publick, of the heads or mem-
 bers, in great measure needless; or by con-

stituting a *part* to examine and judge for the *whole*; or, finally, by the establishment of an *absolute* authority, from which there shall be no right of appeal. In the *first case*, christians having little or no occasion for the use of their *reason* in religion, inasmuch as *infallibility* supercedes the *necessity* of *reasoning*, God's government over them will hardly seem to be *moral*; at least, will not be so *properly* such, as over the rest of mankind, who are obliged to be still exercising their judging faculty if they have a mind to find out the truth. Is it not enough that the *truth* is more *easily* found by the assistance of the *scripture-revelation*, unless it be, as it were, *obtruded* upon us? What room is here for diligence, and an ingenuous love of truth; or for the improvement of the understanding? In the *second case*, God would have vested one of the most important trusts in the whole world, where he had not conferr'd an answerable qualification for the due discharge of it; I mean, a superior degree of *understanding* and *integrity*, which 'tis highly proper *they* should have whose *judgment* is to be the *standard* to all others. And, in the *last case*, notwithstanding the *natural equality* of mankind, the *many* would be slaves of the worst kind, to a *few*. There being this proof of the natural *right* of private judgment, and
this

this presumption against any *human authority* pretending to controul it; 'till I meet with counter-evidence sufficient to overballance this, I shall think no apology necessary for my resolution to *prove all things*, and *hold fast only that which is good*: especially living among *Protestants*, who, in *principle*, are all on the same side, I should be glad to say in *practice* too; but that I cannot, there being few who, while they assert their *right* by renouncing all submission to every other party, do not servilely give it up by an implicit faith in their own: and their *leaders*, instead of honestly shewing them the inconsistency and pernicious effects of this conduct, encourage them in it. So that, in short, the *crime* of examining, or of a blind submission; and so, *vice versa*, the *virtue* of one or the other of these depends upon examining or not examining in the *right place*, and submitting or not submitting to the *right party*; of which each party takes upon it to be sole and absolute judge for it self, and all other parties.

THERE is one thing more of great weight (yet not so much consider'd as it should be, which is the reason of my mentioning it) in favour of the right of *private judgment*; and that is, that at the same time the evidence for it is *incomparably greater* than on the side of *authority*, much

less is required ; of which this reason is to be given, that were persons universally to challenge a *right* of judging for themselves, and to act upon it, though they would not be exempted from error, yet every man's errors would be to himself : or, at worst, if any error should spread so wide as, if possible, to involve a whole generation of men, which is not at all likely, yet there would be no danger of its descending from one generation to another by an uninterrupted succession : whereas, supposing the notion of *authority* to take place, any errors introduced upon that foot, must be as universal as that notion, and live as long as that does ; so as, without a very happy chance or providence, to be entail'd upon following ages. And this, in fact, hath been the cause that the corruptions of *natural* and *reveal'd* religion have been so extensive, and so difficult to be cured : men in every age and nation having been too prone, for the sake of their ease, or for some other such reason, to sacrifice their own understandings to the *dictators of religious belief* ; and too scrupulous and backward in examining the *principles*, however absurd, in which they have been educated. And upon this account, the claim of *authority* in matters of *faith* and *conscience*, before it is admitted, ought to be supported with nothing less than *demonstration*.

II. As

II. As *particular persons*, so *christian societies* have this *right* of judging for themselves. Uniting together for the joint and regular performance of the duties of divine worship, and the benefit of gospel institutions, they are to agree upon such rules of worship and discipline as they shall judge most conformable to scripture, and best fitted to promote their common edification in knowledge, holiness and charity. And in all matters relating to the society (such as admitting persons into it, or separating them from it) 'tis their undoubted *right* and *duty* to act as their consciences shall direct them to do.

THIS *right* of judging in *societies* is as evident as that of *particular christians*. They do, indeed, amount to much the same thing, *viz.* every man's *right* to judge for himself: for the persons enjoying this *right*, may be consider'd either in their *separate*, or their *social capacity*; in both which there is the same reason why the free exercise of this *right* should not be denied them. All the difference is, that in one case men pass a judgment concerning what they have to do as members of a religious *society*, and entrusted with a share in the direction of its affairs; in the other as having no such relation and trust: so that the judgment of the *society* is really nothing else but the concurrence

currence or union of the judgments of the several individuals composing that *society*; and any farther than the particulars, or the majority of them join in it in person, or by the agreed managers of their affairs, it cannot be justly deem'd the judgment of the *society*. However,

III. THIS alone will not justify *single persons*, or bodies and *societies* of *christians*, that they do no more than they are in conscience persuaded they ought to do; for conscience may not be rightly inform'd thro' some culpable neglect, or may be set wrong by criminal passions and prejudices.

No one doubts that this frequently happens to christians *separately* consider'd: they are persuaded of the truth of those doctrines which they espouse and contend for; and of the lawfulness, if not necessity and commendableness of those things which they practise. But whence is this persuasion? is it the result of a diligent and unbiass'd enquiry into the mind and will of God, in whatever way he hath been pleased to discover it to them? or rather, is it not taken up hastily, and without consideration; or to serve a turn, and because it suits their humour and inclination? how seldom is the former the case? how frequently the latter? And when it is so, as men are more liable to be mistaken, so their mistakes are likely to

to be more dangerous and hurtful: for tho' conscience is our *immediate* rule, yet the rule of *conscience* is *truth*, as God hath manifested it to us in his *word*, or by the *reason* and *nature* of things, and we are capable of apprehending it: and by this *external rule*, or the *truth as discoverable by us*, we are to be judg'd in the last day.

THIS is a matter of such importance, that every one will do well to reflect seriously upon it; that he be not too precipitate in forming his judgment of opinions, or of the persons that hold them: for what if I should err in my judgment, and in my practice, as consequent upon that judgment, spending my zeal upon things that are no part of *christianity*, perhaps of a very opposite nature, and treating those as unworthy of *christian fellowship*, and hardly objects of *common charity*, who are really an honour to their profession? it will be a poor excuse that I did but what my *conscience* told me was my duty to do; since I ought to have taken care to inform my *conscience* better.

AND whereas it may be thought that *churches*, or *religious societies*, have a privilege, in this regard, above private *christians*; I can see no ground for such an imagination: since they too may be wrong in their decisions; and, without due care, are as much

much subject to it as particular persons can be : nay, and more so, as the members of such *societies* are not only in danger of being seduced by their own passions, but by the passions and cunning of others ; and by that means resemble drowning men, who, laying hold of one another, help each of them to sink their companions. And God hath no where promised to preserve those from *error*, whether single persons or societies, who do not make use of the proper means for this end.

AND farther, *societies* are no more exempted from *blame*, than they are from *error* ; that is, if they embrace error for truth, and then contend for it, and impose it : or if, without sufficient reason, they reject any from their communion, they herein violate their duty to their common Lord, as well as injure their fellow servants ; and their sin, instead of being *extenuated* by this consideration, that it is committed by the whole community, is but the more aggravated by it ; since, in proportion to the *greater importance* of the determinations of whole bodies of christians, and the *worse consequences* that follow when they are wrong, is the *obligation* they are under to examine things with all calmness, and with the maturest deliberation, before they proceed to determine. If they err, the error is not so easily

easily acknowledged and retrieved, and satisfaction made for the wrong done; as in case of *private* mistakes and injuries. Which, certainly, is a good *reason* why churches should exercise the greatest caution and charity; and banishing all passion and prejudice, and private and party views from their debates and resolution, should keep as close to the *rule* which their Master hath left them as possibly they can: but what is this *rule*? the answer to this question is contained in the next proposition.

IV. THE general *rule* which private christians are to follow in fixing the *terms* of *christian friendship*, and brotherly correspondence; and churches, in settling those of *church-communion*, is this; that they ^b *receive one another*, as far as they have reason to think that *Christ hath received them* all, *to the glory of God*. Here then are the two grand questions; Who are they whom *Christ hath received*? and what are we to understand by his having *received* them?

FOR my own part, I make no scruple to declare my opinion in this matter; that every *honest man*, living where he hath opportunities of knowing the doctrine of *Christ*, is a *good christian*; and that every *good christian* is approved by his Master now, and will be rewarded by him at last; notwithstanding—

^b Rom. xv. 7.

withstanding any *difference* in judgment between him and his fellow-christians, even tho' they should be in the *right*, and he in the *wrong*. Or, more fully, thus; whoever, making public profession of *faith* in Christ, and hope of *salvation* by him, according to the acknowledged *rule* of both in scripture, does unfeignedly endeavour to understand that *rule*, and to frame his *belief* and *practice* agreeably to it; whoever does this, is in a state of acceptance with God, and by the *tenor* of the gospel-covenant, entitled to everlasting life and salvation. Christ requires of him no more than this *sincere endeavour* to know and do his *will*, as the *necessary condition* of his admission into the fellowship of his church, communicating in all the privileges of it, and being made partaker of those saving and eternal blessings which are revealed and promised in the gospel. This is the character of the person whom *Christ hath received*; and this, as I apprehend, the thing meant by Christ's *receiving him*. For what else can be meant than his *receiving* the *believing Romans* into his favour and friendship, without any regard to the distinction which there had been between them, of *Jews* and *Gentiles*; or was still, in respect of their notions about *meats*, and *drinks*, and *days*; this being what he presses them to when he would have them *receive*
one

one another? He would have them entertain a hearty esteem and affection one towards another, in which they were too deficient; not *despising* or *judging* one the other. And therefore, in correspondence to this mutual affection and forbearance, as the thing intended by their *receiving one another*, the argument requires, that by *Christ's receiving them*, we understand his affectionate regard to them, as his true disciples, and whom therefore he treats as such.

THIS is the more evident from its being said of the same persons, that *God hath received them*; which in the 18th verse of that chapter, is explained by their being *acceptable to God*. And if *acceptable to God*, they were, doubtless, so to *Christ* too; and, in token of this *acceptance*, not excluded from any privileges of that body of which they were living and creditable members.

AND whom *God* and *Christ* have *received*, we may justly ask, upon what ground or warrant do *men* presume to *reject*? Ought they not to argue as the apostle *Peter*, when vindicating his going in to the *Gentiles*; forasmuch as *God* gave them the like gift as he did unto us who believed in the Lord *Jesus*? “What was I, that I could withstand *God*? shall we pretend to be wiser
“ than the head of the church? or to have

“ a

“ a power and jurisdiction in it that he hath
 “ not given us, and which he himself never
 “ exercised ?” The sum of the matter is,
 that having reason to think men sincere in
 their profession of the gospel, lovers of *truth*,
 and of *peace*, and *holiness*, private christians
 ought not to avoid them as persons not fit to
 be convers’d with, nor the church to separate
 them from its *communion*, or to deny them
 admission into it when desired, as if they were
 undeserving to be received into *christian*
fellowship, or to continue in it. There
 ought to be no other standing *test* than *godly*
sincerity ; of which *sincerity* there can be no
 sufficient ground to doubt, merely because
 of a *difference* in opinion, if, in all other
 respects, the *temper* which men discover,
 and the *manner* of life they lead, plainly
 correspond with the *christian rule*.

I AM aware, and not afraid to take notice
 of it, that the *controversy*, touching which
 the *apostle* exhorts the converts at *Rome* to
 mutual *charity* and *forbearance*, was only
 about the bounds of *christian liberty* ; not of
 such a nature as many of those modern dis-
 putes are by which the christian church is torn,
 and men divided in their affections from one
 another. But, in answer to this, without
 insisting upon what I am now going to men-
 tion, that the non-obligation to observe the
 law of *Moses* was not a matter of small
 I importance,

importance, and that those who thought themselves bound to join the observation of the *law* with the *faith* of the *gospel*, therein went contrary to the judgment of the *apostles*, which they knew, or might have known; which seems to raise the difference then into an equality with the disputes among us: not to insist upon this, tho' considerable, I shall think it enough to cite the express words of the *apostle*, that ^d *the kingdom of God is - - - righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost: and that he who in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.* This, I take it, is direct to the point, and will authorize any one to say, *that as the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, so neither is it a unity of opinions, be they what they will, where a difference is consistent with mens serving Christ in righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

I farther own, that *receiving one another*, in the place before-quoted, does not *directly* mean, receive one another into *church-communion*; since it doth not appear that the convert *Jews* and *Gentiles* separated *communion* in *Rome*, upon account of differences about *meat*, and *drink*, and *days*^e. But this does not at all weaken the argument from hence, as applied to the *terms* of *church-com-*

^d Rom. xiv. 17, 18.

^e Mr. Locke in loc.

munion now. They were to *receive one another* : why ? because *Christ had received them*, into his affection, and into his church : and, consequently, had there been any *breach* of christian-fellowship among them, the argument from hence had been much stronger for their making up *such a breach*, than any in point merely of *private friendship*, and the common offices of mutual good will ; the former *breach* including this latter, and rendering it much wider. It was only because there was no occasion for it that the exhortation *to receive one another* did not, at that time, extend to *church fellowship*. Wherever therefore there is this occasion for the application of it, there it is justly applied. *Christ* hath received such and such ; they are in favour with him, and reckon'd members of his body ; therefore *you* should receive them, not shutting them out of your hearts ; no, nor out of your societies, without some other reason for it than a *disagreement* in opinion.

FROM the history of the *New Testament* 'tis apparent, that nothing more was demanded of those who were willing to be received into the christian church, as absolutely necessary thereto, than publicly professing their belief, that *Jesus* is the *Messiah*, or *Christ*, or the like. In virtue of this profession, they took *Christ* for their Lord and Master, and
were

were oblig'd to yield themselves to all his instructions as such. And, provided they did this, they were obliged to no more; and, without doing any more, had the same title to continue in the church, and to partake in all church-privileges, as they had to be first received into it. That which gave them this title was, their performing all they bound themselves to at their first admission. And what was that? not, surely, to believe any particular *doctrines*, or to obey any particular *commands*, whether they should or should not appear to have *Christ* for their author: no; but to do all that could reasonably be expected from persons owning the *authority* of Christ, to know the truth as it is in Jesus, and to follow its directions. Whatever therefore was no proof, in the judgment of *charity*, of their failing in this essential point, could be no just cause for their being cast out of the *communion* of the *faithful*.

IN like manner, and by parity of *reason*, now, all that the christian can be obliged to, is, a sincere desire and endeavour to conform his *faith* and *practice* to the *Scriptures*, as the confessed *standard* or *rule* of both. And his whole duty, by the *gospel-covenant*, being summ'd up in this one word *sincerity*; as long as his fellow-christians have reason to be satisfied of this, they can have no valid reason, on account of *involuntary errors* (sup-

posing his opinions erroneous) to esteem him an enemy of the *gospel*, and to eject, or keep him out of their fellowship: and that proceeding by this *rule*, in fixing the *terms* of *christian communion*, has the greatest tendency to promote the glory of *God*, is a farther confirmation of its truth. That it has this tendency, I shall show in another place, and pass on to another proposition.

5. IF a single *christian* is not warranted by the *gospel* to *avoid* others as unfit to be convers'd with, merely for difference in opinion; or a single congregation of christians, to *shut*, or *cast them out of their communion* upon that account; much less have several churches or congregations united under one *form* of government, or by a voluntary confederacy, any such power. The more extensive the *community*, the less is their *power* to narrow the *terms* of *communion*; because it is more a matter of *prudence* than *necessity*, that there should be any such communities governing themselves by another *rule* besides the scriptures, (for which reason that *rule*, if they have any such, ought to be as comprehensive as possible) because too they cannot so easily deviate from the established *rules*, whatever the occasion be, as particular congregations can: and, finally, because of the pernicious consequence of debarring all those from *communion*, how well

well qualified soever to adorn the church, and be useful in it, who cannot comply with the *terms* imposed; since the number will be greater of the persons aggrieved, and their case less capable of relief and succour. For how can it be supposed, when *doctrines* and *rites*, about which good and wise men unavoidably differ, are establish'd into articles of *faith*, and forms of *worship*, from which none belonging to such a party or denomination of christians, must presume to vary; when this is the case, how can it be supposed, but a great many must lie under the hardship of being excluded, because not able to come up to the *terms* required, or the temptation of complying against their consciences, to obtain some worldly advantages, or to avoid some worldly inconveniences, which cannot well be obtained or avoided any other way? and what refuge have they when cast out by their fellow christians? it may be none at all, if separate *communions* are not tolerated, or none at hand. If a person be excluded from the communion of a single congregation, who are not in a state of combination with others, there's an end of it: nor is the case so very deplorable, while he may be welcome to some other communion, and be owned by other christians, who will know better how to value him, if he be one of strict *virtue* and *probity*, and will carry it

towards him in a more friendly and christian manner. But what shall he do, if all the churches within a certain district, or in the land, or even in several nations (which is the case of the *Papists*, when they proceed to excommunication) are shut against him, or all those churches with which he should otherwise be most willing to communicate; and those whose *party-marks* he does not bear, are taught to avoid him, as if he carried the plague, or some other infectious distemper about him? Banish'd thus from the *spiritual* and even *civil* communion of those who are servants of the same Lord, how melancholy must his condition be? how great the temptation to belie his conscience? and how inexcusable therefore they who without necessity drive their fellow-christians to such streights and difficulties - - - For the sake of rites and ceremonies, which at best are indifferent, and owned so to be, or for disputable opinions, shall the church of Christ be divided, and christians carry it as strangely towards one another as if they were embarked in a different and even contrary interest? annexing rites of our own contriving to the *sacraments* and *ordinances* of the gospel, without which, satisfied or not satisfied, others shall not enjoy them, if we can help it, is bad; but not so bad as imposing *articles of faith*. And if it should be pleaded in behalf of any
establish-

establishment, that the *laity* are not oblig'd to declare their *faith* in the disputed *points* of *religion*; tho' the *constitution* is to be commended so far, yet will not this entirely justify it, since the *laity* are concerned out of christian charity, and from a regard to the rites of the christian church, and of the Head and Lawgiver of it, to take part in the hardships impos'd upon *ministers*, and which is more, are liable to suffer themselves by these means. For if *ministers* must not impartially search after the *truth*, and freely declare it, what case are the poor *laity* like to be in? To which add this farther, that if a *liturgy* be imposed, in which controverted opinions make a part, this approaches very near to the requiring a declaration of *faith* from the *laity*; since their constantly joining in those parts of the *liturgy* really is, or may be judged by them to be, much the same as professing their *belief* of the points in controversy; which the ever-memorable Mr. *Hales*^h thought a justifiable *reason* for separating from a church that mix'd such *suspected opinions* with her *liturgy*.

6. MUCH less still may the church inflict *civil penalties* on account of *religious differences*, or call in the *assistance* of the magistrate, or any others, to do it. This is to persecute those whom *Christ* has receiv'd,

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instead

^h *Treat of Schism.*

instead of *receiving* them ourselves, as we ought to do ; shutting the *door* against them, and then being very angry with them, and punishing them for not entering ; and can neither be reconciled with natural *equity*, nor the *rules* of the *gospel*. Natural *equity* is violated by such proceeding ; since every man having a right to pursue his own judgment in matters of mere *conscience*, or when the society is not injured, no other man can have a *right* to punish him for the exercise of his liberty, and much less to punish him for it as a criminal action. And what natural *equity* condemns, as it does all *violence* and *compulsion* in *religion*, we may be sure *religion* itself, *true religion*, and much more the *best-natur'd* and most *perfect religion*, the christian, does not allow. 'Tis so far from doing it, that nothing can be more opposite to the *spirit* of christianity, than the *spirit* of persecution in all its shapes and degrees. And, indeed, *persecution*, in the higher and more numerous instances of it, is such an odious thing, that the most *guilty* are sometimes willing to shift off the imputation of it from themselves ; as was the case in the bloody Queen *Mary's* reign, when the *popish* bishops, in a solemn assembly, declared, they had no hand in the barbarities then committed : and *Philip* of *Spain*, Queen *Mary's* husband, finding the odium fell upon him and the Queen,
made

made his *confessor* preach before him, who, in the presence of all the court, boldly charged the bishops with all the *cruelties* which the kingdom complain'd of; defying them to show, in all the holy scripture, a single passage that authorized christians to punish people for matters regarding *conscience* only. - - - But perhaps the penalties made use of are only *negative*: suppose it, yet where there is no *crime*, and much more where an example is given of a regard to *conscience*, and the good of the publick does not require it, *negative* penalties have as truly the nature of *injustice* as *positive* ones, and the *least* as the *greatest*. And whereas it may be pleaded, that this only is a matter of *civil policy*, the contrary is evident from that which is the *penalty*; which is not any *civil offence*, but *nonconformity* in some *peculiarities* of *religion*, which the state would hereby concern itself about, extending its favour alike to all honest men and faithful subjects; if those whose peculiar office it is to make peace among mankind, and to promote the happiness of all, did not envy their fellow subjects the enjoyment of their natural rights, and shew a willingness to engross the emoluments of the world, which they should be examples of despising.

HAVING thus, as I think, establish'd the point I aimed at, *viz.* the obligations that

that christians are under to maintain brotherly *love* and *communion*, where there is no better reason for the contrary than a *diversity* of opinion ; I shall now consider the objections on the other side, especially those from scripture.

AND here we are press'd with the admonitions and examples occurring in the New Testament, which 'tis pretended manifestly contradict this charitable scheme: but I must own, after examining the places alledged, I am not able to perceive any such thing. 'Tis very true, we find sundry cautions given by the *apostles* to the christian converts, to avoid certain persons: the church too might, for ought I know, excommunicate them ; as the *apostles* sometimes delivered them up to *Satan* for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus ; that is, that being visited with bodily pains, and weaknesses, and distempers, as a punishment of their turbulent and factious behaviour, and endeavouring to corrupt the simplicity and purity of the christian doctrines, in order to serve their wicked ends (in inflicting which distempers evil spirits were usually employ'd as the instruments) that by suffering such bodily pains and sicknesses, they might be brought to a better temper, and no more wilfully oppose the *truth* and the *apostles*, who

who were the great *depositaries* and *dispensers* of it. These were the persons aim'd at, and to such alone will the descriptions given of them agree ; not to men of a sober christian behaviour, who, if they err, err'd unwillingly, *careful to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and men ; and following after charity and peace with all that call'd upon the Lord Jesus out of a pure heart.* We have not a single caution, or the least hint of one, about *avoiding* or *excommunicating* persons of this character : *if a brother walked disorderly, from such a one they were to withdraw themselves :* and when a member of the *Corinthian* church was guilty of an *immorality*, not so much as nam'd among the Gentiles, and which, if let alone, might have been of very ill consequence ; *he that had done this deed was to be taken away from them.*

LET us freely, but modestly, examine the places usually produced by those who are for contracting the bounds of *christian communion*, and declaring a sort of war against their brethren, who do not *think* as they do. The following passage has been often press'd into the service ; *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned, and avoid them.* Read the next verse, and you will know the

• Rom. xvi. 17.

the character of the men ; *for they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly ; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.* Religion, with these men, was only a tool, which they managed in subserviency to their own corrupt passions and appetites ; and suitable to this, their great principle was their conduct and behaviour in the churches which the apostles had planted ; taking advantage of the weakness and prejudices of some ; misrepresenting the conduct and principles of others ; espousing those opinions and doctrines, and imposing them (observe that) as *necessary* to salvation, by which they could best answer their carnal ends ; and by such means causing divisions and scandals ; setting christians one against another, and tempting some to throw off the christian faith, or to fall into sin ; which things were contrary to the doctrines they had learned ; *i. e.* such a temper and conduct as this, was a manifest *contradiction* to the great doctrines of peaceableness, charity, and seeking each others edification. As for the different opinions in that church at the time when this epistle was wrote, they may be gathered from the preceding chapters ; and seem to have been all resolvable into that great controversy about the obligation of the *law of Moses* : and whatever side they had
taken

taken in these disputes, had they otherwise behaved as peaceable and worthy members of the christian church, the apostles would not have ordered those on the other side to *mark* and *avoid* them on this account ; which, by the way, there seems to be no necessity of understanding of cutting them off from the body of the faithful by a sentence of *excommunication* : but as 'tis probable, on both sides, there were some ill-disposed and ill-designing men, especially among the *Judaizers*, who made use of those differences as an opportunity to promote their own private and secular views, whatever became of the christian interest, or the souls of their brethren, for which they had no manner of concern. We must therefore go further for a text to justify our *judging* honest peaceable christians, on account of their *opinions*, for this will not do by any means.

THE same apostle makes mention of *heresies* which God would permit to arise among them, ^h *that they who were approv'd might be made manifest. - - -* ⁱ *And what could those heresies be, but a departure, in some point or other, from that faith which they had received from the apostles?* The answer is easy ; whatever these *heresies* were, they cannot mean

^h 1 Cor. xi. 19. to *Foster*.

ⁱ Vide *Stebbing's* second Letter

mean such *errors* as persons of *sincere piety*, and who made it their business to *follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord*, could fall into: and 'tis very evident, the persons intended were of another and very different complection. In the 18th verse the apostle tells them, that he had *heard there were divisions among them*; adding, *καὶ μερὶς τῆς οἰκου*; and I believe it as to a *part of you*; there being those among them who were of a proud, contentious spirit, as we learn from the first and third chapters of this epistle. It then follows, *there must also be heresies among you*; that is, as some interpreters understand it, 'tis unavoidable but there will be such divisions among you: *heresies* and *divisions* here being only different words for the same thing. Or if something farther is intended by the word *heresy* than by *division*, yet there is no necessity at all of referring it directly to matters of *doctrine*; since it may be explain'd in the following manner. “ It cannot be
 “ expected, when there are those seeds and
 “ principles of division in the tempers of
 “ men, and they cherish and indulge them,
 “ that they will stop here; continuing to live
 “ in external communion with each other
 “ (which he expresses ^k by *their coming to-*
 “ *gether in the church, and in one place*;)”
 “ while

^k Ver. 11, 18, 20.

“ while their hearts are thus divided : no ;
 “ but those ill humours will work, till they
 “ break out into separate parties and com-
 “ munion ; one party driving the other
 “ from them, or mutually repelling one ano-
 “ ther ; confining the true religion each to
 “ themselves, and hardly allowing a possibi-
 “ lity of salvation to the others : and the
 “ effect of this will be (as God is pleas’d to
 “ permit it, because it will have this effect)
 “ *that they who are approved*, in opposition to
 “ the *μῆρ*, the *contentious part*, mentioned
 “ in the former verse, will be made mani-
 “ fest : the lovers of peace, the prudent, the
 “ charitable and considerate, by preserving
 “ their christian temper and moderation, and
 “ being upon their guard against the infi-
 “ nuations of evil men, will have an oppor-
 “ tunity to show themselves to their own
 “ praise, and the great credit of the gospel.”

It is indeed very natural to suppose, that the chief leaders in those divisions would espouse some peculiar tenets, to be for a badge of distinction, and to perpetuate the animosity between the contending parties : this is natural to suppose ; and ’tis probable something of this nature happened in the church of *Corinth*, where there seems to have been some who taught, that *fornication* is an innocent thing ; and that a person might eat of things offered to *idols*, without any prejudice to himself, or any offence against God :

God : but as these are not *errors* which the good and peaceable among them can be supposed to have maintain'd ; so neither does the word *heresies* here *directly* and *necessarily* relate to such *errors* : and much less to *speculative opinions*, about which men of the best meaning were liable to differ as well as others, even such as those whom the apostle here means by the *approved* ; for he seems to speak of the same persons in this place, and *Rom. xiv. 17, 18. the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost ; for he that in those things serves Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of men.* The things which recommended the christians at *Rome* or *Corinth*, and would do so any where else, to the approbation of God and men, were *righteousness and peace*, an *unity of affection* with all that love Christ Jesus in sincerity ; a freedom from a dogmatical imposing humour, and a meek and virtuous behaviour.

BUT does not our apostle, writing to his son *Timothy*, warn him ¹ to hold faith and a good conscience, which some having put away, concerning the faith had made shipwreck : of whom was *Hymenæus* and *Alexander*, whom he had delivered to *Satan*, that they might learn not to blaspheme ? Very well ; and what is the instruction we are to gather from hence ?

¹ 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.

hence? why, that he who parts with a *good conscience*, is not likely to keep his *faith* long after: (which, by the way, is a good argument why we should never *subscribe* to what we do not *believe*, this being an approach to a man's putting away a good conscience, and that to making shipwreck of his faith; and why no man of conscience, and lover of sincerity, should urge *subscription* upon others:) this, I say, is what we are to infer, and that *Hymenæus* and *Alexander* were very bad men; not good men, labouring under involuntary errors, of which it would have been an unaccountable way of curing them, *to deliver them to Satan*.

BUT what can we say to that direction which the apostle gives *Titus*? ⁿ *A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself*. Why, the answer is not far to seek; for besides that we ought to be very sure that the cases are parallel, before we proceed to do every thing that the apostles, or men employ'd and authorized by the apostles, did, let us only consider what sort of a man this *heretic* was; not certainly one of an unspotted life and conversation, that had unwillingly fallen into some mistakes, which he was very ready to leave, upon

VOL. IV.

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^a Titus iii. 10, 11.

better information, and who, moreover, was not averſe to communicating with others in *different* ſentiments ; ſtudious to preſerve the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace. The *heretic* whom *Titus* was to reject, was a perſon of quite another character ; probably one of thoſe ° *unruly and vain talkers and deceivers*, mentioned before, *who ſubverted whole houſes, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's ſake. The man that is an heretic* ſeems to refer to the preceding verſe, and was one that made or headed a ſect, upon account of the *fooliſh queſtions* there mentioned, *i. e.* was a *Judaizer*, and a bad man. The *heretic* did not ſo much need *inſtruction* as *admonition* ; to be reprov'd for his evil conduct, ſhown the aggravations of it, and the conſequences attending it, and warn'd to amend on peril of being diſown'd by the apoſtles, and all that adhered to them, and by Chriſt himſelf at laſt : a very proper way of awakening one that had violated the rules of the goſpel ; but altogether as improper to convince a man of an involuntary error. This may be farther confirmed by a paſſage where *Titus* is directed to ^p *reprove ſome perſons ſharply, that they might be ſound in the faith* ; which ſhews that their errors were not infirmities of the underſtanding, ſince *Titus*, in order to

° Titus i. 10, 11.

^p Titus i. 13.

to their being *sound in the faith*, was not to *instruct*, but *reprove* them ; as much as to say, the fault lay in their *wills*. Finally, the *heretic sinned, and was self-condemned* : the temper and views by which he was influenced, as well as the part he acted, evidently contradicting the reason of his own mind, and the rules of the gospel, the religion he outwardly profess'd : he is properly enough said to be *self-condemned*, because he was condemned by a law or rule, the authority of which he himself acknowledged, and must be so by his own sense of things, if it was not in a great degree debased : and he could easily see and censure the same ill conduct in another, where he was not concerned, which is stiled ^P *condemning one's self* ; or he was *self-condemned* by cutting himself off from the communion, even of that part of the christian church which continued in the apostles doctrine and fellowship ; raising a faction in opposition to the apostles of Christ, and dividing himself from the body of the faithful. He was by this means *self-excommunicated*, a condition as unhappy, and a punishment as much to be dreaded, as any almost he could be condemned to. And if this be the sense of *self-condemned*, then the meaning of *Titus rejecting* such an *heretic* cannot be casting him out

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the communion of the church to which he did not belong, having voluntarily banish'd himself from it; but discountenancing him, and renouncing all fraternal intimacy and communication with him, and teaching others to do the same; that by seeming to give encouragement to such men, the way of truth might not be evil spoken of, or the christian religion, then a stranger or new-comer in the world, suffer in its interest or reputation.

IF it be said that a *black mark* is set upon many only for errors in *doctrine*, and that some *opinions* are declared to be *damnable*; and to prove this, 2 *Tim.* ii. 18. and 2 *Pet.* ii. 1. are produced; 'tis obvious to reply: As to the first of these places, it is indeed said, *that Hymenæus and Philetus had erred concerning the truth; saying, that the resurrection was past already, or that there was no future resurrection; and overthrow the faith of some.* But now as for *Hymenæus*, if he was the same with him mentioned 1 *Tim.* i. 20. as most probably he was, 'tis certain he was a person of a very ill character, *having put away a good conscience before he made shipwreck of the faith*: and for *Philetus*, he may be judg'd of by his companion, with whom he was associated in the room of *Alexander*. As both of them belonged to that vile clan which the apostle describes

describes in the third chapter, *who crept into houses, and led captive some silly people, laden with sins, and led away by divers lusts before they were seduced by them ; that resisted the truth, as Iannes and Jambres withstood Moses, men of corrupt minds, and reprobate concerning the faith, so as hardly to deserve the name of christians, tho' they took that name upon them for a cover to their wicked designs.* This was undoubtedly the case of those false teachers spoken of by St. Peter, *who brought in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them ; they were such as walked after the flesh, in the lusts of uncleanness ; counted it pleasure to riot in the day-time ; had eyes full of adultery, and hearts exercised with covetous practices ; and at last shew'd what they were by their apostacy from the christian profession, leaving the way of righteousness, and turning from the holy commandment delivered unto them.*

UPON the whole then, I observe, that the persons against whom the christians, in the time of the apostles, are warn'd to be upon their guard, were men of a very bad character, no real friends to Christ or his religion. ¹ *Eusebius*, an early historian of the christian church, takes notice that the false christ, false prophets, and false apostles, who divided the unity of the church by

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¹ Hist. Eccl. lib. 4. cap. 22.

their corrupt doctrines against God and his Christ, had their original from the *Jews*: and 'tis probable of that sort were the persons mostly intended in the places cited before, *i. e.* *Jews by birth*, extremely corrupted in their morals, and who had no kindness for the purity of the christian doctrine. The *heretic Titus* was to *admonish*, and not reforming upon admonition, to *reject*, was a *Judaizer*. The apostle *Paul* says, they *were especially of the circumcision*. The apostle *Peter* writing to the *Jewish* christians, says, *that the false teachers should be amongst themselves*; and the part of their character, that they were *despisers of governments*, *ver. 10.* suits the *Jewish* zealots exactly. They first of all made their advantage of the affection their countrymen retained for the law of *Moses*, raising a vast deal of disturbance in the christian church upon that account; but afterward went farther, corrupting the doctrines of Christ more and more, in order to serve the purposes of their lusts, and avarice, and ambition; 'till at length they hardly retain'd any thing of christianity besides the name, if they did not in form apostatize from it. And no wonder that such as these should be judg'd unworthy of the favour and fellowship of all those that wish'd well to the christian interest. But what is all this

† Titus iii. 9.

this to our not *receiving* persons that manifest the greatest regard to the name and authority of Christ, believing his doctrine as far as they are able to apprehend it, obeying his laws, and kindly affectioned to all his members? Whatsoever errors such men may entertain, they can never be in the number of those *heretics* whom the apostle would have *Titus* to reject.

BEFORE I pass any farther, I beg leave to observe, that when the author of the epistle to the *Hebrews* cautions them [†] *not to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines*, he probably had his eye on the *Jewish* leaders just mentioned, who taught different and contrary doctrines, and such too as they had borrow'd from the *Gentile philosophy*, for that seems the meaning of the word *ἐναυαίς*.

IF it be further urged, that the apostle *Paul* writing to the *Corinthians*, [†] *beseeches them by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they would all speak the same thing, and that there might be no divisions among them, but that they would be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment*; it will be readily confess'd, that the duty of christians, in all ages, is to be of the same *charitable* mind and temper; and to *endeavour* to be of the *same judgment* too, by bringing their judgments as near as they

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[Heb. xiii. 9.

† 1 Cor. i. 10.

can to the scripture revelation, the original standard of truth in the church ; not by blindly submitting their own judgment to that of other men. And as to the christians of that time, if they were sincerely desirous of ending their disputes, they had opportunities and advantages for it, which we have not ; being able to consult the apostles themselves, those living oracles, upon any point in difference between them. And were it so that the apostles had any to succeed them in their *infallibility*, we should be perverse not to take this short and easy way of deciding all our controversies ; but for want of any such living *infallible* guides, we are to make the best we can of the scriptures, and are to be commended, not censured, discouraged, and excommunicated for so doing. This, by the way, shews that we cannot now argue from the *doctrines* to the *men* ; (thus, such persons hold *false doctrines*, therefore they are *bad men*) for as this will not prove their doctrines to be *false*, that they do not agree with those of the church, *i. e.* of the party they belong to ; so supposing them to be *false*, the men notwithstanding may be *good men*, having heartily labour'd to find the truth : whereas of those that opposed the apostles, and rent the unity of the church, and this at such a critical time, there was too much reason to think they were

were persons ill-affected to *truth* and *virtue*; which they farther discovered by their immoral conduct.

BUT what if men err in *fundamentals*? to this, which is judg'd a very puzzling question, it is not difficult to return an answer, which will satisfy an unprejudiced person. For if by *fundamentals* be meant such doctrines, the *explicit* knowledge and belief of which is necessary to salvation, that may be fundamental to one which is not to another, according to mens different capacities and opportunities of knowing the truth; while no sincerely good man, none *that fears God, and works righteousness*, can err *fundamentally*, in this sense of the word, or with regard to any doctrine, the *belief* of which is *necessary* to his particular salvation. Our blessed Saviour hath assured us, that if any man be ^a *willing to do the will of God, ~~shall know~~ he shall know of doctrines whether they be of God.* And in the *parable of the sower*, he represents persons of this character, of a ^b *good and honest heart*, as not only *receiving the word, but bringing forth fruit to perfection.* Let what has been prov'd under the *fourth* head be also consider'd; that all the *faith* necessary to the being baptized for the *remission of sins*, was the hearty assent-

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^a John vii. 17.

^b Luke viii. 15.

ing to this proposition, that *Christ* was the *Son of God*, or the *Messiah*, 'Tis very remarkable also to this purpose, that the *sentence* of the *last day*, and the *eternal states* of men consequent upon it, are always represented as turning upon what *they have done*, or *not done*; not upon what they thought, or did not think of this and that particular *doctrine* of religion: from whence I am far from making this inference, that 'tis of no concern what men *believe* in religious matters, (of which I shall have occasion to say more presently) but so much, I think, we may fairly conclude, and even with certainty, that since the *final condition* of every christian is to be determined by his *moral character*, no one, whose heart is right with God, can possibly fall into *fundamental* errors in this sense of the word, *i. e.* into such errors as will exclude him from salvation: this being a supposition not to be reconciled with the *truth* before-mentioned, that men are to be judg'd according to their *works*; and particularly with that of our Saviour, that *they who have done good shall come forth to the resurrection of life*: for if so, then no good man shall be condemned for involuntary errors.

IF by *fundamentals* are intended some truths necessary to be professed by all, in order to their having a right to the *communion* of the church;

church; then, I say, that only can be *fundamental* in which all good christians agree: since all such being *receiv'd by Christ to the glory of God*, it cannot be the *will* of Christ that any such should be rejected by their fellow-christians; unless the *circumstances* of the case should happen to be so very peculiar and extraordinary, that *receiving* such a person into a particular *communion* of christians, would, upon the whole, do more hurt to the interests of religion, and to that particular society, than shewing their charity by *receiving* him would do service: and 'tis questionable whether even this may be done, when he has no opportunity of communicating elsewhere.

IN a word, when the apostle says, that *there is one body, and one spirit, and one Lord, and one faith*, it must, I think, be implied, that they who are members of this one body, actuated by this one Spirit, and in subjection to this one Lord, (which may be said of all true christians) do likewise all hold and profess the *one faith*. This *one faith* therefore cannot necessarily include those things, about which good men, who are inquisitive after *truth*, and possess'd of abilities and opportunities of coming acquainted with it, may, and often do differ between themselves; for then some of them would not have that

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one faith; which is contrary to the apostle's supposition, that all belonging to the *one* body of Christ agree in it. Finally,

It may be objected, that this puts *truth* and *error* upon the same level; representing it a thing indifferent what men *believe*, and is an encouragement to them to be quite negligent about their *notions* in religion. So far from it, that nothing can more promote the *search* after *truth*, in the only *proper way*, than this will. The love of *truth*, or an unfeigned desire and endeavour to have the mind possess'd with a right notion of *divine things*, is included in that temper of mind which denominates a true christian: so that whoever is utterly regardless what he believes, whether it be true or false, agreeable to the *gospel revelation*, or repugnant to it, cannot be a true christian; and must answer for this his *indifference*, as well as for his other sins, in the *day* of final judgment. Knowing this, the *upright man*, out of conscience towards God, and a cordial affection to the *truth*, will, according to his capacity and circumstances in life, apply himself to the study of the *scriptures*; when he is left to derive his *faith* from hence, without any danger of his suffering in his reputation or worldly interest, or free enjoyment of the ordinances of the gospel upon that account. To the study of the *scriptures*,

tures, I say, for that surely is the most direct and proper way of arriving at the simplicity of *gospel truth*, and not seeking for it in the received *creeds* of any party of men; which there will be more temptation to do, when there are certain *privileges* annex'd to mens believing as others believe, if not *penalties* attending the contrary. And by this means men will be more zealous for what their respective parties call the *truth*; but more indifferent about that *faith which was once delivered to the saints* in the holy scriptures.

LET me now be allowed to recommend practising on the *principles* established in this enquiry, by a consideration mention'd by the apostle in a text I have all along had in view, ^d *Receive ye one another, as Christ also has received us, to the glory of God*. Whether we refer these last words to Christ, the *nearer* antecedent, (as Christ has *received* both sides to the glory of God) or to the *remoter* antecedent, *viz.* the *contending parties* themselves, who were to *receive* one another to the *glory of God*; the instruction is the same; that the *glory of God* is most advanced by this mutual *condescension* and *forbearance* of christians one towards another. Nor will it make any material difference, if, with a very judicious commentator, we take the words (*to the*

^d Rom. xv. 7.

the glory of God) in an active sense ; that Christ had *received* them to *glorify* God : the believing *Jews*, principally, to magnify the *truth* of God ; the believing *Gentiles* his *mercy* : I say, this will not make any considerable difference ; since the *glory of God* is, in both senses of the word, made the *rule* and *end* of our actions, and supposed to be most promoted by the strictest union of all the sincere disciples of Christ among themselves. Universal *charity* and *good will* among christians would have a most happy influence upon them, to dispose them for *praise* and *thanksgiving* towards God ; as we read of the first church at *Jerusalem* ^e, that at the same time they continued with one accord in acts of *worship* and *fellowship*, they *praised* God ; and could do it much better when they did it all together, with one mouth and one heart : whereas a narrow uncharitable spirit does naturally cramp and deaden the nobler exercises of divine love, and holy praise, and thanksgiving. And then 'tis certain the *christian religion* appears much more worthy of God, upon the *charitable* than upon the *contracted* scheme. It was frequently objected to the first christians, by their *heathen* adversaries, that they laid an unreasonable stress upon *believing* : and there would have been too much reason for this charge,

^e Acts ii. 44, &c.

charge, if christians had excluded one another from the hope of *mercy*, and from mutual *communion*, for unavoidable differences of opinion, while they agreed in the main truths, and in the practice of universal holiness and goodness; and had taught that errors might expose men to the displeasure of God, tho' they did not proceed from vicious affections of *mind*, or a want of love to the *truth*. But this is not what christianity means by the *necessity* of *believing*. It supposes every *good man*, having the gospel fairly proposed to him, to be a good christian; that he believes the *truth* of the gospel, and every particular *doctrine* of it which 'tis necessary for him to believe; and does nowhere encourage the *professors* of it to pass sentence upon one another, and to cast one another out of *communion*, merely for *diversity* of sentiments in the disputable parts of religion: which, according to my apprehension, is very much to the honour of our holy religion, and to the glory of God in the constitution of it.

IN a word, could christians every where be persuaded to walk by this *rule*, the church militant on earth would resemble the church triumphant above, where universal love and concord reign; and to which all the faithful followers of Christ shall be join'd as they die out of this world, and there attain to
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that *uniformity* in their notions about divine things, which is not to be hop'd for in the present life.

THE reasoning of ^f *Josephus*, when he is pleading for a friendly usage of the *Jews*, notwithstanding the *diversity* of their *rites* and *ceremonies*, by which they were distinguished from other nations, may, with so much greater *strength* and *evidence*, be applied here, that I cannot forbear closing this essay with it. “ Amidst the difference
“ of customs which prevail among man-
“ kind, *justice* belongs alike to all men;
“ equally useful to the *Greek*, and to the
“ *Barbarian*; to which our *law* hath a very
“ great regard, and, provided we keep it
“ inviolate, may very well render us the
“ friends of all, and dear to all. Where-
“ fore I would entreat all, that they would
“ not be so *averse* to us, on the score of our
“ *peculiar customs*; as inclined to embrace
“ us, out of regard to our zeal for *true*
“ *virtue*: for this is common to all; and
“ without this, human life could not sub-
“ sist.” So far *Josephus*. How much more forcible is the argument when accommodated to the *disputes* that are among good christians; who are all the followers of the same divine Master, and practise the same divine virtues? the things common to them
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^f Antiquit. lib. xvi. c. 10.

are of infinitely greater importance ; while those about which they differ, are far from being essential to *true piety* : for which reason they ought to forbear one another, and to love one another for the sake of those common *principles*, and common *virtues*, by which they are all united between themselves, and with their exalted head.



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C H I L D R E N

Are concern'd in the
S I N S of their P A R E N T S.

Written in the Year 1719.

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Are concern'd in the
S I N S of their P A R E N T S.

THIS general *question* may be resolv'd into two others ; the consideration of which will comprehend all that is necessary to give us a right view of the point under debate.

- I. How far the *sins* of *parents* may affect their *children* ? And the answer to this will prepare the way to the second.
- II. How far it is the *duty* of *children* to *confess* their *parents* sins ?

I. How far the *sins* of *parents* may affect their *children*? To which I answer, in these two particulars, *viz.* so far as to intercept or cut off those *blessings* and *privileges* to which the *children* have no *natural right*: and to occasion the *childrens* being punished for their *own sins*; which they would not have been, or not so soon, or to such a degree, if their *parents* had not sinned before them.

I. So far as to intercept or cut off those *privileges* to which the *children* have no *natural right*. It is this must justify civil governments in their *severity* towards the *children* of certain criminals; which, according to ^a *Pufendorff*, may, in some cases, be carried so far as to the banishing them from their native country; their *innocence* notwithstanding. Which assertion of his he supports with this reason, that *nature* gives no man a *right* to continue *always* in the same civil society. However that be, the general principle stands unshaken; that of *rights*, not strictly natural and originally inherent, a person may be divested through *another's* fault; but for those that are truly such, no one can forfeit them for a person, but the person *himself*. With respect to human laws, *life* and *liberty* are *rights* of this kind, being

^a De Jure Nat. & Gent.

being what every man is born to, and of which therefore no man may be justly disfeiz'd without a *personal* forfeiture. But seeing, with regard to the supreme Governour of the world, the alone *right* which innocent beings can pretend to, is not to be placed in a state of existence upon the whole worse than not being at all; God, without the least impeachment of his *justice*, may take away that life which he freely lent; or inflict pains for so long a time, and to such a degree, as leave *life* and *perception*, upon the result, equally eligible with the privation of them. And as the *justice* of God will *allow* of this, *his wisdom*, as Rector of the universe, may, in some circumstances *require* it; (not taking into the account an after-state, when his *goodness* will have an opportunity to make his creatures abundant amends for the transient miseries of this life). Thus the children of the seven devoted nations were to be destroy'd, as a caution to mankind, and particularly to the *Israelites*, against *idolatry*, and the other *abominations* of *Canaan*. Thus *children* may be visited with *sickness* and *death* for an *admonition* to the *parent*, who is to look upon himself as the guilty *cause*, and may often read his *sin* in his *punishment*. This was the *case* of *David* in the death of the child born of *adultery*. And 'tis exceeding remarkable to this purpose, that in the *sanc-*

200 *How far Children are concern'd* VOL. IV.
tion of the *second commandment*, there is a wide difference made between the *reward* of the *obedient*, and the *punishment* of the *disobedient*; in that, while the former extends to *thousands* of generations, (which, probably, hath a peculiar reference to the favour shewn the *Jews* in their remotest successions, for the sake of the patriarchs, ^b *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*;) this latter is restrain'd to the *third* and *fourth* generation. And why is there a stop made here, but because the *father* may live long enough to see, and consequently to be punished in his *children* of the *third* and *fourth* generation? It is in the same sense, and perhaps, taught it by this commandment, that *Plato* saith, that *punishment* may be reserv'd to the descendents in the *fourth* degree. So that still the *parent* only is punished, not the *child*, (I speak of *children* not in a capacity of *actual* sin) for *proper* punishment, unless we will except the case of a *voluntary substitution*, hath an inseparable relation to proper *inherent* guilt. With the curse denounc'd to the wicked man upon the *fruit of his body*, is join'd a curse on the ^c *fruit of his land, and the increase of his kine and sheep*. And by one we are instructed how to understand the other. If there be a *blast* upon the estate and possessions of a wicked man; if a murrain be

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^b Levit. xxvi. 42.

^c Deut. xxviii. 18.

sent among his cattle, or a rot among his sheep; in this case, whoever hath a mind to speak properly, will not say, that the *cattle*, or the *sheep* are cursed, but the *owner*. Apply this to the *children* of the sinner, and the great difficulty on this head vanishes.

2. THE *parent's* sin may be the *occasion* that the *children* are punish'd for their *own*: which perhaps they would not have been at all, (understand it of this world) or not so soon, or to such a degree, if their *fathers* had not sinned before them. The *wisdom* of God sets limits to his *patience*, as well in regard of *families* and *nations* as *particular persons*; and what several years are to the *latter*, successive generations are in the *former*. God indulges to *particular* persons a reasonable time for their amendment, waiting long to be *gracious*; and so likewise to *societies*; but with a *sovereign variety*, both as to the one and the other, allowing more or less time as he pleases. But when that *term*, whatever it be, is expir'd, and the kind intention of the divine *forbearance* is not complied with, God proceeds to execute the sentence which had been so long delay'd. Thus the reason given, why the *promise* made to *Abraham* of the land of *Canaan* could take place no sooner, is, that ^d *the iniquity of the Amorites was not then full*. God had deter-

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^d Gen. xv. 16.

mined not to put the old inhabitants out of possession till their iniquities were become intolerable, and the land, as it were, forfeited and overcharg'd with their sins, should *spew them out*, at what time they would be ripe for vengeance. In like manner, the *Jews filled up the measure* of their own and their fathers' sins before *wrath came upon them to the uttermost*. And then their destruction was so terrible, that it look'd as if God were reckoning with that generation for *all the righteous blood that had been shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zacharias*: not that they were punished for all the *blood* that had been shed in all the ages before, (this cannot be suppos'd, were it for no other reason than that they were not the posterity of *Cain*, by whom *Abel* was murdered) but for their *own* sins; which, great as they were in themselves, were farther heighten'd by their being an *imitation* of their *fathers* in those sins against which God had express'd his displeasure, and of which they themselves could see, and acknowledge the evil in their *fathers*: and it may not be altogether unlikely, that the phrase, *οργη εις τελος*, is not only used to signify the *nature* of their destruction, which was *final*, but intimates the *cause* of it too,

viz.

* Levit. xviii. 28. 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16, 17.
1 Theff. ii. 16. Matth. xxiii. 35.

viz. their having fill'd up their sin, and being thereby come to the *end* of God's patience, which was always designed to reach no farther. And I beg leave to add this likewise, as my present thought, that as no person is properly punishable for the *sins* of his *parents*, so the *parents sins* shall not, ordinarily at least, so much as give *occasion* to the *sufferings* of their *children* when grown up, if they take care not to tread in the steps of their *fathers* : which comes home to the case of the *Jews* in ^f *Ezekiel's* time ; who, overlooking their *own* sins as the immediate source of their calamities, throw all the fault on their *forefathers* ; in opposition to which wicked insinuation of theirs, the *prophet* tells them, that if a *son*, taking warning by his *father's* sins, considereth, and doth that which is lawful and right, he *shall not bear* the *iniquity* of the *father*. The *infant* may suffer (tho' he cannot be punished) for the *parent's* sin ; but the *adult person*, being capable of acting and answering for himself, shall stand on his own bottom, and fare suitably to his *own* behaviour. And this hath led me to a conjecture, in which I find since I have a great deal of good company, concerning an expression in the *second commandment* ; that as by the *iniquities* of the fathers is meant what that word obviously signifies ;

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^f Ezek. xviii.

so by the phrase of *them that hate me*, are meant, not the *same persons* as before, but either the *grandchildren themselves*, or their *immediate parents*: that is, the *child* grown up shall not be visited for the *iniquities* of his *father*, unless he deserves the same character with his *father*, of one *that hates God*; nor shall the *infant* suffer for the *grandfather's* sins, if the *immediate parents* are pious and good; because, upon supposition he did, not only the *grandfather*, but the *next father* would suffer in his *child*, and, through the greater *nearness*, even more than the *grandfather*; that is, he would be punish'd for the sins of his *father*, which it is not to be supposed he should, seeing he doth not *hate God* as his *father* did. 'Tis evident, the generation of the *Canaanites* then living when the land was conquer'd by *Joshua*, the *Jews* carried captive to *Babylon*; those that crucified the Son of God, and rejected the gospel preach'd to them by his apostles, (and we may well suppose the same of the *Amalekites*, whom *Saul*, by express order from God, destroy'd^g) were the children of *wicked* ancestors, not only by *descent*, but a *resemblance of manners*, and suffer'd no greater *judgments* than their *own* sins call'd for; tho' possibly these *judgments* might not have been sent, had not
God

^g See particularly, 1 Sam. xv. 33.

God been highly provok'd by the *preceding* generations. The *occasional* and the *meritorious* cause are very different things, and by no means to be confounded; we readily distinguish them in a thousand other instances: I shall name but one, which I had rather make choice of, as it affords something of a *parallel* to the case in hand. Let us therefore suppose two or three rebellions to be raised and suppress'd in the same kingdom within the compass of a few years; though they should not be the same individual persons concerned, and tho' the *crime* should be entirely alike in all other respects but this, that the following had the *example* of the *first* to profit by, yet they that are found in the *last* shall be much more severely dealt with: the occasion of their being so, are the *former* rebellions, in regard of which many are executed that would have otherwise escaped; but the reason on which the *law* condemns them, is because they are rebels *themselves*.--This for the first question. The next is,

II. How far it is the *duty* of children to *confess* their *parents* sins? To which question, before I return a direct answer, I shall make my way by these *two* remarks,

I. CON-

1. **CONFESSIO**N, in its general meaning, signifies no more than an acknowledgment or declaration of a thing to be : the word will admit of no other sense where we read of *confessing the name of God* ; *confessing to God among the heathen* ; *confessing of Christ* ; *confessing a resurrection and spirits*. And, by a parity of reason, where it is of a *sinful fact*, the *fact* is not necessarily implied to be *his* who makes the *confession* ; whether personally or by imputation. *Confessing our fathers sins* doth not make or suppose *us* to have a part in them, any more than *confessing the divine holiness* makes us to become *holy* ; or *confessing Jesus Christ to be righteous*, of itself intitles us to his *righteousness*. The general *act*, as I said before, is the same ; but the *objects* are various : according to which diversity of the *object* the different circumstances of the *act* are to be determined.--Are we *confessing* the perfections of God ? it ought to be done with the utmost elevation of mind and heart. Are we *confessing* our *own* sins ? let us do it with the most pungent sorrow, the deepest shame, the most lively regret, and the lowest humiliation and self-abasement. Are we *confessing* the sins of our *fathers* ? let it be done with a hearty dislike of their ungrateful and offensive behaviour towards the
the

the blessed God, and settled resolutions of not following their bad examples.

2. THE circumstances of the *Jewish* nation were so very peculiar, that their *practice* alone, unsupported by other reasons, is not to be drawn into a *precedent*. They had special reasons for *confessing their fathers sins*: they were a *chosen nation*, the *people of God* in such a sense as left no room for any other part of the world to challenge that title; for their *holy books* told them, and the *tradition* was most assuredly believed among them, that God had inclosed them from the rest of mankind by a *divine charter*; had granted to the founders of their race the reversion of the land of *Canaan* some hundreds of years before they enjoy'd it; their commonwealth was form'd and nurs'd up by the most stupendous *miracles*; God, as their law-giver, descended on *mount Sinai*, and from thence gave them *statutes*; his *covenant* with them was full of promises of *long life*, *plenty*, *victory over enemies*, and an *established peace and prosperity*; they had the *Shechinah*, or the divine presence manifested by a sensible; glory a *tabernacle* first, and afterwards a magnificent *temple*, where God had put his name, and said that he would always dwell. Distinguished by such *privileges*, they had reason to ask with triumph,
What

^h *What one nation in the earth is like unto thy people, even Israel, whom God went to redeem for a people to himself, and to make him a name?--* Now, when after such a solemn apparatus the event should be so little answerable, when God should consume them with *famine*, with *pestilence*, and by the *sword*; when they should be delivered into the hands of their enemies, who should tyrannize over them at pleasure, destroy their boasted temple, which it might have been thought the Deity who resided there, should have preserved from violation, carrying away the costly furniture, and the sacred vessels to adorn the temples of their idol gods; and when the same vengeance pursues them unsatisfied, from generation to generation: all these things so little agreeing with the idea of a people so highly favoured of heaven, must, at first sight, have a very strange appearance; and tempt the unthinking world, and too many of the *Israelites* themselves, to conclude that the wonderful *history* of the birth of that nation was all a *fable*; or that the God of the *Jews* was subject to *fickleness* and *inconstancy* in so lightly forsaking his charge. Wherefore, to clear God from all such dishonourable suspicions, they are to *confess* their *own* and their *fathers sins* and

and provocations, acknowledging that God had not forsaken them, till they had first forsaken him ; nor departed from the plain *letter* of his covenant, which set before them both a *blessing* and a *curse* ; a blessing if they obeyed the commandments of the Lord their God, and a *curse* if they did not. The *curses* are very particularly specified, *Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii.* and foretold to come upon them for their *disobedience*, especially to the *second commandment* : which the *Jews* make an objection against our Jesus being the Messiah ; of their sin in rejecting *whom*, and the *destruction* to ensue upon it, they were not previously warn'd, as they were against ⁱ *idolatry*. This instructs us in the reason of their being obliged to *confess* their *own* transgressions, and the transgressions of their *fathers* ; when, for their general defection from God, he should bring upon them all the *curses written in his book*. Such a *confession* had the nature of a publick testimony to the truth of God in his promises and threatnings, according to that of *Joshua*,
^k *Therefore it shall come to pass, that as all good things are come upon you, which the Lord*

ⁱ See *Limborch. coll. cum erud. Jud.* where the objection is strongly urged, and as well answered.

^k *Joshua xxiii. 15.*

your God promised you ; so shall the Lord your God bring upon you all evil things, until he have destroyed you from off this good land which the Lord your God hath given you. I shall close this remark with observing, that the command given to the *Jews* to *confess* their *own* iniquity, and the iniquity of their *fathers*, comes immediately after the *curfes* enumerated in that ¹ chapter ; which is a probable argument of its being added for the end just mentioned. Why else doth *Daniel* in his *confession* of *sin*, say, ^m *That all this evil was come upon them, according to what was written in the law of Moses ?* In which words, what can he have regard to, if not the chapter before cited ?

THIS being so, were there no other reasons of the *custom* the *Jews* had of *confessing* their *fathers* *sins*, common to them and us ; their doing this would not infer an *obligation* on us to practise the same : but, to speak feely, there are, I think, such *reasons* to be assigned as may occur, and when they do, will make it the *duty of children*, in any nation of the world, to *confess* the *sins of their fathers*.

1. A *confession* of this sort may be necessary in honour to the divine *goodness* and *patience* ; and as proper in a *sacrifice* of *thankf-*

¹ Lev. xxvi.

^m Dan. ix. 13.

thanksgiving, as on a *day of fasting and humiliation*. As the shades in a picture make the beauties of it to appear with the greater advantage; so nothing more illustrates the unmerited favour of God, than the *sinfulness* of the nation or people towards whom it hath been display'd. And when we are blessing God for the privileges, civil and religious, that have been handed down to us from our ancestors, and then add the consideration how often they have been forfeited, we shall be the more affected with gratitude to God, and value for the mercies enjoy'd, to think, that through so many ages, and some of them so exceeding corrupt, they should have reach'd down to us. Of this we have an example in *Psal. cvi.* in which, tho' it be a psalm of praise, there is, throughout, a mixture of *thanksgiving* and *confession*; and in reckoning up the deliverances vouchsafed to the *fathers*, their *sins* are not forgotten. ⁿ *Praise ye the Lord, O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. We have sinned with our fathers; we have committed iniquity. Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt, &c.*

ⁿ *Psal. cvi. 1, 6, 7.*

2. WHEN the judgments of God have rested long upon a nation, the more fully to vindicate his justice in their calamities, they ought to accept of the punishment of their iniquity, *confessing their sins, and the sins of their fathers*; and saying as *Daniel*, ° *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of face*: and as *Nehemiah*, p *Howbeit, thou art just in all that thou hast brought upon us, for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly*; neither have our kings nor our princes, our priests nor our fathers kept thy law, nor hearkened to thy commandments and thy testimonies where-with thou didst testify against them.

3. BY way of aggravation of our own sins. For after we have been assured from reason and the word of God, that he will not always bear with a sinful people, and in his righteous providence he hath, by terrible things, witnessed against the iniquities of our fathers, for us to go on unreform'd, must be a considerable accession to our guilt. Our fathers sinned, and smarted for their sin; and yet, heedless and insensible, we repeat *their* crimes, or only change them for worse.

° Dan. ix. 7. p Neh. ix. 33 --- 35: '

^a *Ætas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
Nos nequiores ; mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosiore.*

By the way, it may not be impertinent to take notice, that by this conclusion of the ode the poet hath explain'd his meaning in the first two lines :

*Delicta majorum immeritus lues,
Romane, donec templa refeceris :*

by which his intention was not to suggest that the *Romans*, his cotemporaries, suffered for no *fault* of their own ; several lines in the ode, and particularly those quoted, acknowledge their *degeneracy*. And though the *crime* of robbing the temples of the gods, and letting them fall into ruins, was their *fathers* ; yet that of suffering them to lie so was *theirs* : I call it *their crime*, in conformity to the ideas which the *Heathen* had of religion.

THUS far then I can admit it to be the *duty of children to confess their fathers sins* : but neither from *scripture*, nor from the *reason* of the thing, can it be gathered,

P 3

I. THAT

^a Hor. lib. 3. ode 6.

I. THAT we are under obligations to *confess the sins of our fathers* as if they were *our own*, or after the same manner as we do *our own*. Of *our own* sins, as we are chargeable with the guilt, so we are liable to the punishment, in proportion to the degrees of the guilt; insomuch that, the sin deserving it, we may be justly punish'd with everlasting damnation. And it would be the same as to the sins of our *predecessors*, in case the proper *guilt* of them might be communicated to us; for, if punishable in any degree for a sin I had no part in the commission of, I may, with equal justice, be punish'd in the same degree, or as far forth as the *actor*: and if for the *sins* of my *father* or *grandfather*, with no less reason for *all the sins* of *all my progenitors*, in the long line between me and the first man: an absurdity too glaring to need my pointing it out. Of my *own sins* I ought to *repent*, ashamed of my wilful folly, and fill'd with indignation against myself: of my *fore-fathers sins* I can no more repent than of the *sins* of my *posterity*; it being as possible for me to prevent what shall be done after I am dead (and more, for to this I may be accessary by my *neglect*) as to help what was acted before I was born. Were it possible, and my *duty* to repent of a *sin*
to

to which I contributed nothing, I might, and perhaps should be bound to repent of all the *sins* that have been, are, or will be committed in any part of the creation. It ought to raise a sad and melancholly thought in my breast, that God should be dishonour'd by creatures made to glorify and enjoy him; but before this can be called *repentance*, the standard of our language must be altered, and our words stamp'd with a new meaning. In the *confessions* of the pious *Jews*, we find a distinction made between their *own sins* and *their fathers*; the good men not imagining their *fathers sins* were to be called *theirs*, any more than theirs *their fathers*.

2. MUCH less are we obliged (I should have said warranted) to set apart *days of fasting purposely for the sins of our fathers*. Were it so, that the Old Testament would furnish instances of this nature; yet ought they not to be urged upon us, whose circumstances can never be the same as *theirs*: but, in truth, we are under no necessity of making this concession; for the *fasts* occasionally observed by the antient *Jews*, 'tis reasonable to suppose, were principally for their *own sins*; and the *confession of their fathers sins* was only incidental, and on the grounds before-mentioned. And, indeed, it

would be too gross an imposition on the reason of mankind, to make the *sins* of our *predecessors* the *chief* subject of our *fasting* and *mourning*, and our *own* only an *accessary*: for be the relation their *sins* have to us what you will, we are certainly in more danger from our *own*, and therefore guilty of the coarsest hypocrisy, if slightly touching upon our *own*, as if there was little need of humbling ourselves for these, we expatiate with a malicious pleasure on the faults of the dead.

3. THERE is yet less reason why we should keep a *solemn fast for some particular sin of our fathers*; and a *sin* too in which we do not imitate them. If the *Israelitish* nation was corrected by the hand of Providence, they could many times lay their finger on the particular *sin* for which the anger of God flam'd against them; which it must be hard, and, in some cases, exceeding rash for us to do, not having the same rule to direct us in our judgment, which they had. But tho' this be considerable, what I lay the principal stress upon is, the *childrens* not imitating their *fathers* in their sin. In the xxvith of *Levit.* where the *Jews* are enjoin'd to *confess the sins of their fathers*, it is also suppos'd^r that they had done wickedly like

^r See particularly the 39, 40, 41 verses of that chapter.

like their *fathers*, and abetted their *fathers sin* by making it their *own*. God had made it a fundamental maxim of the *Jewish* polity, [†] *that the children should not be put to death for the fathers; but every man for his own sin*. And the same rule which he here prescribes the civil magistrate, he declares, in other places, to be the measure of his own proceeding towards such as manifest their dislike of their *fathers sins* by a contrary behaviour. And is not God's *word* to be relied on in this matter? shall men, after such repeated assurances, make a shew of being under terrible apprehensions from the *sins* of a foregoing age, which yet they profess the greatest detestation for? doth not this betray a consciousness that their *inclinations*, not to say their *practices*, are not of a piece with their profess'd *principles*? It were well if some, who have their *panics* return upon them yearly, discover'd more concern for their *own immoralities* and *impieties*, which, without repentance, God hath told them shall never be pardon'd. But 'tis common for those who fear where no fear is, to be fearless where there is most reason to be afraid.

ALL the pretence here is, that others give them occasion for *fasting*. The *Presbyterians*

[†] Deut. xxiv. 16.

byterians now are, it seems, the spawn of the *old* rebels, (I shall not say who are the confederates of the *new*) and their principles the same. After many thanks for their extraordinary charity in keeping a standing *fast* for the wickedness of their neighbours state-principles, the *Presbyterians* take the liberty to declare, that they are not ashamed of their principles, under all the ill names they have been dress'd up in, as some men have shewn they can occasionally be of theirs. The principles of the *Presbyterians* are no other than the *clergy* themselves were glad to borrow of them in their distress; tho' they had no sooner done their business with them, and saved their *benefices*, but they forgot the obligation, and return'd them with reproach instead of interest: as you may have known some gentlemen transcribe whole pages out of an author, retailing what they steal for their own, and then treat the unfortunate author with the utmost indifference and contempt, that the theft may not be found out. The principles of the *dissenters* are the very same with those the *revolution* was founded upon; they have had the sanction of *acts of parliament*, and the *suffrage* of the most august assembly in the world, in a late celebrated trial, the learned council for the *Doctor* not excepted: to them, finally, we are obliged for our liberties,

berties, and the protestant succession, the only security, under providence, of all our blessings. Can they say any such thing for theirs? let them search our history for the glorious fruits they have produced. "One would think (saith a right reverend prelate) it were abundantly enough for one *doctrine* to have nigh ruined the nation twice in one century." The *doctrine* he meant is, that of *passive obedience* and *absolute non-resistance*; which none can make more noise with, and practise less, than they who are most bigotted to the 30th of *January*.

4. OUR conduct is still more unaccountable, if we keep a *fast* for the sin of a *preceding generation*, at the time when the scene of providence gives us not the least ground to suspect that God *imputes to us* that sin. The *confession* required from the *Jews* of their *fathers sins*, was to be made when that nation should be reduced to the most deplorable condition, and by continued judgments, set forth as examples, suffering the vengeance of heaven. And thus low and abject was their state when this duty was put in practice by *Daniel* and others. But from this precept, with the practice of these eminent saints to direct us in understanding it, it will by no means follow, that God expects from us an *annual fast* for the wickedness

edness of former times, after the nation hath been long settled on its antient foundations. God hath preserved to us our laws and religion by miracles of providence; crown'd our arms against the common enemy of *Europe* with unparalelled success; baffled the plots and conspiracies of evil designing men at home; and at last blest us with a *sovereign* that is the admiration of foreign nations, a pattern for their princes, and would be the universal delight of his own people, could the most consummate wisdom, unwearied vigilance, and equal regard to the welfare of all his subjects make him so. Where, in all this, are the intimations of God's *displeasure for a sin of our fathers*, for which he is not yet appeas'd?

5. THE absurdity is further increased by the supposition of a *national fast* on the account of that which was not the *fact* of the *nation*; and if I should say the *murder of King Charles* was not, I should say no more than is exactly true, and might be confirm'd by the authority of three states: and that not since the *revolution*, which would have little weight with some people; but immediately upon the *restoration* of the church and monarchy of *England*: for after having taken notice that *not a tenth part of the house of commons was left*, some having been secluded

cluded and imprison'd, others forc'd out,
 &c. they have these remarkable words:
 " ' By this horrid action the protestant re-
 " ligious hath received the greatest wound
 " and reproach, and the people of *England*
 " the most insupportable shame and infamy
 " that it was possible for the enemies of
 " God and the king to bring upon us ;
 " while the fanatic rage of a *few* miscre-
 " ants stands imputed by our adversaries to
 " the whole nation." Who can desire a
 fuller testimony than this, and more deci-
 sive? For my part, I cannot imagine with
 what face some men, in defiance of the
 plainest evidence, can every year charge this
fact upon the nation ; and this notwithstand-
 ing their being declared adversaries to the
 nation who do so, by a parliament for
 whose *acts* they have the utmost defe-
 rence. Upon this, if it might be permit-
 ted, I would ask one civil question, Whe-
 ther they who would look upon the abolish-
 ing of the 30th of *January* as taking away
one of the main pillars of the church, would
 have thought themselves obliged to have
 expressed their abhorrence of the *murder* of
King William after this manner, if the assas-
 sins had succeeded in their design against the
 life of that excellent prince?

* Act for the attainder of the Regicides, Ann. 12.
 Car. II.

6. THAT which crowns the absurdity, is contending for the *perpetuity* of such *fasts*. One of the *Jewish* Rabbies hath a saying, "That there is never a judgment befalls them, in which there is not an ounce of the golden calf." This is pretty modest, compar'd with the extravagance of certain among us, who when such things fall out as their prejudices construe in the nature of judgments, place more than half to the account of the 30th of *January*; as if, poor sheep! they had done nothing. These men, I doubt, have some other end to serve in keeping this *fast*, besides deprecating the wrath of God. God *retaineth not his anger for ever*; but they will never be persuaded to lay aside *theirs*. Will the *third* and *fourth* generation satisfy them? why, according to that reckoning, 'tis high time for their revenge to subside; for the second, third, and fourth generations are not so many centuries as some are willing to compute them; but so many descents as may be supposed to take place during the life of the *first* person from whom they are number'd. And how few are now living that can remember the transactions between 41 and 48, and were then capable of taking parties? not to argue from the *changes* that have since happened; a protestant revolution; the accession of a new family to the throne; the children of fanatics

tics become patterns of zeal to the best churchmen, and the children of royalists strenuous asserters of liberty and property; which should make all sober men, and lovers of their country, if not free, yet less fond of, with one consent to give up a *day* which, under the pretence of being set apart to *deplore* our civil dissensions, hath been chiefly of use to *perpetuate* the same animosities, and to bring us within danger of another *civil war*.



the private interests of each to the public
convenience, and the children of
the American farmer of liberty and property
which shall make all other things and
interests of their country. It is not that, yet less
that of which one cannot to give his own
will, under the power of law, but
to secure our own happiness, that
of the farmer to the state, the true source
of the nation's wealth, and the basis of
the nation's power.

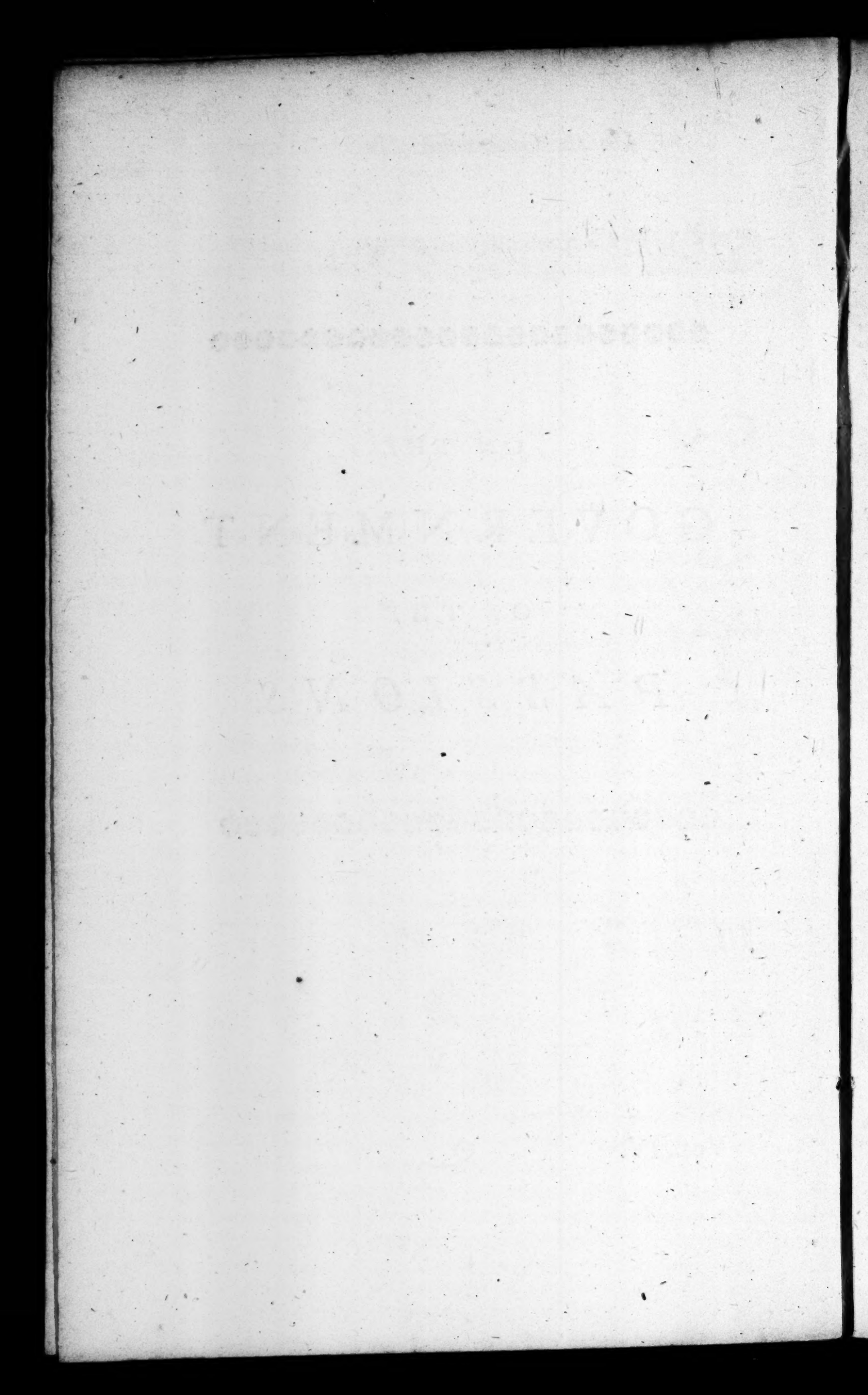


ON THE
GOVERNMENT
OF THE
PASSIONS.



VOL. IV.

Q





ON THE
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PASSIONS.

THE government of the *passions* being a matter of very great importance, upon a religious as well as other accounts; and most people being shamefully deficient in it, an Essay on this subject cannot be unnecessary, and may be very useful. I design therefore,

I. To lay down some *propositions*, which may make our meditations on this subject more distinct and useful.

II. To show what is implied in the *due government of the passions*.

III. To recommend some *rules* which, carefully remembred and observed, may be serviceable to this end. And,

Q 2

IV.

IV. OFFER a few things to consideration, by way of *motive* to the practice of this too much neglected duty.

§ I. I SHALL begin with laying down some *propositions*, which may render our meditations on this subject more distinct and useful. The following are of this kind.

I. *ANY* emotion of soul which affects the body, and is affected by it, may be called a *passion*. The name *passion* seems to be given to such emotions upon this account, that both soul and body are in some degree *passive* in them; they are *acted upon*, rather than *act*. The soul is acted upon by the body, and the body by the soul; and both by the object which raises the *passion*. And because the workings of *anger* are commonly most *violent*, and there are *more frequent* instances of this *passion* than of others; from hence it comes to pass, that the word *passion* is usually restrain'd to *anger*: but we are to remember, that there are *other passions* besides this; and that we are sometimes put out of possession of ourselves by them, *as much* as we are by *anger*, though not *so often*. To draw up a compleat list of the *passions*, with an examination of their several natures, and a distinction of them by their proper names, as it would be tedious
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at present, so of little use. It is enough if we know that *love* and *hatred*, *joy* and *sorrow*, *hope* and *fear*, *anger*, *desire*, *jealousy*, *commiseration*, *envy*, and the like, are here meant ; all which we are better acquainted with from our own experience and feeling, than we could be from any description. The difference between *passion* and *pure affection* lies in this, that a *pure spirit* may have the same *affections* as we have ; but then a *pure spirit* not being under the influence of a body, has not those *affections* excited in it exactly after the *same manner* as the soul of man, which is united to a body of flesh ; nor does it feel the same *sort of impressions* from them : the former are *pure affections*, the latter *passions*. The love and hatred of a *man* and an *angel* are different things ; the original of which difference is to be sought for in bodily temper and constitution, to which that higher rank of beings is a stranger. The affections in us, when they are conversant about *spiritual* objects, are oftner call'd by the name of *affections* than of *passions* ; for instance, it is not usual to say the *passion* of *divine love*, but the *affection* : the reason is, that the body has not so discernible an influence upon these affections, nor is so sensibly influenced by them ; but the soul has them more apart to itself. However, as there

are no affections of the human heart, not excepting those which are most spiritual in their nature, but receive some tincture from the body, and make some alteration in it, though less discernible; I shall, in treating of the *government of the passions*, use the words *passion* and *affection* as equivalent terms: and the rather, because an object that is spiritual and invisible, may, by collecting and centring the thoughts intensely upon it, produce a very *sensible passion*. The *love of God*, the *hope of heaven*, the *fear of hell*, may become *passions* in the properest sense, especially in persons of a warm and lively temperament of body; and have the same general nature with our common love, and hope, and fear, and joy, when the objects are exceeding different. How often does the royal *Psalmist*, when he is describing his love to God and his law, express himself in the language of the most vehement *passions*? Let me give a single instance of this; ^a *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.* But then it is remarkable, that these purer *spiritual passions* are not for the most part so easily raised, are less violent, and must borrow the assistance of the *imagination*.
The

^a Psal. lxxxiv. 1, 2.

The *passions* which fix upon sensible objects often surprize a man, and take forcible possession of him ; they need not be invited and cherished ; they intrude into the soul, and grow upon us without our approbation : on the contrary, the more refined *passions* are kindled by collecting the thoughts, and uniting them for a long time together upon the object, they encrease by slow degrees, and must be carefully cultivated and improved. Our other *passions* are too often impetuous and ungovernable, these are remiss and languid ; the others need to be check'd, these to be enflam'd. Finally, when spiritual objects draw forth the *passions*, it must be by the *imagination*, a faculty which borders upon *sense* : the mind is forced to have recourse to sensible representations, in order to make the efficacy of spiritual things more sensible ; to engage the *fancy* first, and by that to move the *passions*. For this reason spiritual and heavenly things are in scripture so frequently illustrated by similitudes, taken from the common objects and occurrences of the present life. 'Tis evident then, that *spiritual affections* may have somewhat *passionate* mix'd with them, and by what means this is effected. Let me add this needful caution ; that we are not to judge of the strength or weakness of our spiritual affections *only*, or *chiefly*, by the

sensible emotion with which they are attended ; because one who has a great deal of real devotion in his heart, may, through a natural coldness of temper, be very much a stranger to those heights and raptures unto which some can work themselves ; who, perhaps, are so far from having made a greater proficiency in religion, as to be wholly void of the truth of it. The surest rule therefore to judge of our affections in religion is, by their effects in the hour of temptation, and in the ordinary course of our conversation. We may say here as our blessed Lord does in another case, ^b *by their fruits ye shall know them*, whether they are really good, or only *seemingly* so.

2. THE *passions* are in their own nature *indifferent* ; being neither good nor evil, but according to the good or ill use we make of them. We find *passions* ascribed to God himself in holy scripture ; where he is represented as *angry, grieved, repenting, jealous*, and the like. It is true, hardly any persons are so ignorant as to need being told that these expressions are not to be understood in their strict and proper sense, but figuratively, and by way of accommodation ; not to denote the *passions* themselves being *really* to be found in God, who is without all *passions*, but his manner of acting in the course

^b Matth. vii. 16.

course of his *providence* ; which, because it sometimes resembles that of a man who is angry, or grieved, or repenting, &c. is therefore described by the name of these several *passions*. But then we must consider, that if, in compliance with human language, the blessed God is spoken of as if he had our imperfections, yet still they are our *innocent*, not our *sinful imperfections* : it cannot therefore be *our sin* that we are liable to various *passions*, nor the effect of the *sin* of *Adam*. *Passion* in general is no part of the *corruption* of our nature, but an ingredient in its *original* constitution ; otherwise, the *second Adam*, who is the Lord from heaven, would not have been subject to any sort of *passions*, which yet from his history we find he was : he took our nature with its *infirmities*, but not with its *corruptions*. And as this is true of the *passions* in general, that they are not necessarily evil ; so likewise of those *particular passions* to which men are most prone through the diversity of their *natural temper*. Not having had the forming of their own natures, they are not answerable for those strong propensities, whether to *anger*, *covetousness*, or the like, which they do, as it were, bring into the world with them. No man can help his being of a *melancholly*, a *choleric*, or a *sanguine* constitution ; but whatever his natural

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temper be, he can help *indulging it*, if it be not fit to be indulged. Nay, the *passions* are so far from being *necessarily evil*, that *most* of them may be made very *useful*, and *all* of them the *occasion* of our greater praise and reward. The *passions* are a *remedy* against the *sluggishness* of our natures; they rouse our drowsy faculties, excite and quicken us to action, and give us a more lively sense of objects, which would otherwise make but faint impressions on our minds; they may be made subservient to virtue and religion, and even to the happiness of the present life, of which I may have occasion to speak more fully hereafter. But then, as on the one hand all our *passions* are not *necessarily evil*; so, nor on the other are they *necessarily good*: some men may have a very happy natural temper, a benevolence of disposition, and a great equality in all their *passions*; and yet all this, as far as it is merely a gift of *nature*, is no part of their commendation. Then only do they deserve praise, when from a sense of duty they cherish and improve these happy dispositions; and thus make a *virtue* of that which at first was only a *natural accomplishment*.

3. WITH the *assistance* of that *grace* which God is *always ready* to afford to those who humbly ask, and faithfully improve it, we are *all*, in some good degree, *able to govern*

govern our *passions*, even so far as to *please* God, and be *rewarded* by him. The *passions* of the mind are not like the circulation of the blood in our bodies, over which we have no command, or at least not *immediately* and *directly*. We cannot, by an act of our will, stop the flowing of our blood, or make it flow faster at our pleasure; but we can arrest a *passion* till we have examined the nature of it, and if it cannot give a good account of itself, may conquer and suppress it. There can be little doubt, that as in other respects, so particularly in this, our natures are very much enfeebled and disordered since the *fall*: we may say here, as in many other instances, *we cannot do the things we would*; we cannot keep our *passions* in that *perfect subjection* which we may desire, and which it was in *Adam's* power to have kept his; he was created in the free enjoyment of his intellectual and moral faculties, and the state he was in was a state of rectitude; so that we cannot wonder if there was a just ballance in the several parts of his nature, and the inclinations of his soul, and the appetites of his body were so exactly temper'd, that the health and happiness of both might more easily have been secured. But our condition is widely different from his; we have not that *natural soundness* of body and mind which he had;
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and as an addition to our unhappiness, we live a life of *sense* and *fancy*, long before we enter upon the life of *reason*, and are bred up in the midst of *erroneous opinions*, and *evil examples*: so that by the time that *reason* comes to be capable of having any influence and authority, *sensual inclinations* are grown strong in us, and our fancies filled with a thousand vain and deluding objects; by which means we are prejudiced on the side of the body and of the world: nay 'tis well, if by a bad or an imprudent education, we are not possess'd with a great many false notions and corrupt habits. Now it must be owned, that all this shows the necessity of our being as timely as we can in our opposition to our *passions*; and the care which parents should take to check the growth of foolish and unreasonable *passions* in their children. It must likewise be confess'd, that this will render the *government of our passions*, whenever we apply ourselves to it, the more difficult, but not impossible; for impossibilities are required of no one: and as for difficulties, the greater they are, the greater reason we have not to increase them by our neglect and indulgence, the greater need there is of diligence and watchfulness, and of prayer to God for his continual assistance. Let us do what we can, and we shall find that we have the *passions so far* under our direction

direction and controul, that they shall not lead us *without* and *against* our consent astray from our true felicity, and bring us under a necessity of committing any wilful sin. They may *tempt* us to offend God, and to expose both religion and ourselves; and 'tis very much if they do not often do this; but then we may choose whether we will *comply* with the temptation; and 'tis not the *temptation*, but our *yielding* to it, that is *our sin*, and what is displeasing to God. We may restrain our *passions* so as that they shall not be continually prevailing upon us to do one foolish action or other, making inroads upon our innocence, and disturbing our own peace, as well as theirs who converse with us. In a word, whatever our *natural passions* are, instead of their being an occasion of our breaking the laws of God, and forfeiting his favour, we may serve and glorify God with them, be examples of the efficacy of religion, be more active and zealous in that which is good, and keep strait on in the way to eternal life and glory. The soul is never without *all* power over its *passions*; and this, were there nothing else, manifests its distinction from the body, and preheminance above it. A *clock*, or any other *machine*, cannot begin or stop, regulate or alter its motions; if it goes right, 'tis without its own knowledge or choice; if it goes wrong,
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it must continue to do so till it is set right. But the soul has a *self-active*, and a *self-determining* power within it ; can consider, or not consider ; *will* to do a thing, or not to do it ; turn its thoughts and affections this way or that ; indulge an inclination, or deny and over-rule it. The soul therefore cannot be a composition of *matter*, nor the actions of the understanding and will, and the tendencies of the affections, have any proper resemblance to *corporeal* motions. When I speak of the power of the soul to govern its *passions*, I all along suppose the concurrent aids of *divine grace* ; nor is there any thing improper in saying, that the soul can do that, which it cannot do *merely* by its own strength, but is able to do by the assistance of God's *grace*, provided it may have that *grace* communicated to it upon doing something which it is able to do ; which is the very truth of the present case. For we can acknowledge our dependence upon God, and pray to him for his help, and put our selves in the best readiness we are able to receive it, and not receive it altogether in vain : and upon these conditions we shall never want it. A great deal may be done by the strength of *reason* and *resolution*, and a great deal more by the aids of *divine grace*. What regards the *decency* of our behaviour, and the *tranquillity* of life, may

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may in great measure be attained by only observing the rules of *common prudence*; as under the influences of *grace*, *natural affections* may be *refined* into *divine virtues*, and serve as wings to carry the soul with the greater swiftness to the object of its felicity.

4. IT is *every ones indispensable duty* to set himself to *govern his passions*; for where the *passions* are under no *government at all*, 'tis impossible there should be any such thing as virtue or real christianity. Here the consequence is undeniably just and true; we *can*, therefore we *ought*. In things indifferent we may be able to do what we are not obliged to do; but the *government of the passions* is not a matter of indifference; there is a sense in which the *whole* of vital practical religion depends upon it, and another in which the *beauty* and *credit* of our religion does so, as will be shewn afterwards. So that if we think it our duty to have any regard to religion, to the being and life of it in our selves, or to the credit and honour of it in the world, we must acknowledge it to be in like manner our duty to preserve some *order* in our *passions* and *affections*, and not to let the vessel drive whithersoever these winds shall happen to carry it. Many things are commanded in the word of God, which are not to be done as they ought without

out taking care of our *affections*; and many sins forbidden, which either immediately *consist* in the *irregularity* and *disorder* of our *passions*, or *proceed* from it. Indeed all the habits of *grace* or *sin* may be said to be no other than *ruling passions* and *affections* of the soul. The *prevailing affection* makes every one's *prevailing character*; and therefore unless we think it is no concern of ours, what *habits*, good or bad, are predominant in us, or that we can do nothing towards introducing good habits, or extirpating evil; it is a plain case that as we would discharge our duty to God, and be just to our own souls, we ought to look well to our *passions*, and to make the *government* of them, according to the rules of *reason* and *religion*, our constant study and care. And this leads me to the next section.

§ 2. I AM next to show *wherein* the *due government* of the *passions* consists. Here all that is of necessity or importance for us to know, may, I think, be comprized in the following particulars.

I. THE *passions*, in order to the *right government* of them, must be *directed* to their *proper object*. This is twofold, *viz.* the *general*, and the *principal* object.

I. IN *general*, no *passion* ought to be placed on that which in the nature of the thing is not a
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proper object of it. We must be careful how we confound things together which ought to be distinguished, or place one thing in the room of another; not suiting the *affection* to the *nature* and *properties* of the *object* on which it terminates. Things are not all good, or all evil; but there are objects of *each kind*, and for each kind of objects *nature* has provided agreeable and correspondent affections, *love*, *desire*, *hope*, and *delight*, for that which is *good*; and *hatred*, *aversion*, *fear*, and *sorrow*, for that which is *evil*. Whoever therefore *hates* that which is *good*, and *loves* that which is *evil*, hates and loves in the *wrong place*. But it may be said, is this possible? can a man choose *evil*, or refuse *good*? not under that very *notion*. But that which is *good in itself*, and good *for us*, we may, through a *mistaken judgment*, or a *wrong turn* and *bias* of soul, have an *aversion* for; and from the same causes make choice of that which is *evil* in its *own nature*, and with regard *to us*. It is easy to give particular instances of this. Are there not those who hate *godliness* and *godly men*, and on the contrary, delight in doing things which their own *reason* and *conscience* condemn, and in them who do the same things? Is it not very common to be *angry* with a true friend, who tells us our faults, though in the softest manner; and *pleased* with a

false friend, who flatters us, and by this slender thread leads us whither he will, perhaps to our eternal ruin? *Grief* is in itself a harmless *passion*; but *grief* at the excellent qualities, the useful actions, and happy success of another, which is called *envy*, is a *base passion*, and notoriously offends against the rule of chusing a *proper object* for our *passions*. *Joy* is a *delightful passion*; but to *rejoice in iniquity*, that is, in any thing whatsoever which is against *truth* and *right*, though it may be agreeable to a corrupt heart, is highly *sinful*. We must therefore be sure, in the first place, that we do not mistake in the *nature* of the *object*, so as to *love* that we should *hate*, to *desire* and pursue what we should *avoid*, and to be *glad* of that for which we should be *griev'd*; and so on the contrary.

2. WE are to have a careful regard to the *principal object* of our *passions*, as well as to the *general object* of them. Our *love* and *desire*, our *hope* and *fear*, our *joy* and *sorrow*, may be lawfully exercised about the things of this life, things which concern our bodies, and our outward welfare and happiness: but the question is, are these things the *principal object* of our *affections*? do we love any creature good more than God himself? earth more than heaven? Is the language of our hearts, *who will shew us any good*;

good; any thing which *worldly* and *sensual* minds call good? or thus, ^b *Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us?* Which of the two do we *most* fear, *sin* or *suffering*? In which do we most earnestly desire success, in our projects for the world, or our endeavours to improve our minds, and better our hearts, and to grow in all the virtues of the christian life? Where is our *chief joy*, in our earthly possessions, or in our spiritual treasures? in the prosperous events of this life, or in the manifestations of the divine favour, and the communications of divine grace? Let me press you to observe and consider, that this is *essential* to the *right government* of the *affections*; that this is the great characteristic, or distinguishing mark of the *renewed* soul, and the soul that is *not renewed*. Whatever defects the good man may labour under, yet in this main point of all he is right; he has *set his affections on things above*, on God, and the things of God; on *heaven*, and the *way* to it. His *passions* may too often get the better of his discretion, and at such times he may say and do things which lessen him in the eyes of the world, and when he comes to reflect, cause him to be very much displeas'd with himself; but when the worst is said of him, he cannot be justly charg'd with loving the

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Psal. iv. 6.

creature more than the Creator ; with being more afraid to lose the world than the favour of God, and a good conscience ; and chusing iniquity rather than affliction. On the contrary, whatever praise a man may have gotten, and however deservedly, by *conquering his passions*, and preserving a calmness and evenness in his behaviour under the several turns of his outward condition, so as not to be visibly elated in prosperity, or dejected in adversity ; nor put out of temper by injuries and provocations : yet, if upon the whole, his *affections* are *most set* upon present and perishing things, if he is a ^c *lover of pleasure more than a lover of God*, and is more solicitous to stand right in the judgment of his fellow-creatures, than to prepare for his final account ; this man fails most miserably in the government of his *affections*, and is guilty of an *essential error* ; having no regard to that which is of the greatest importance of all, *viz.* that the *principal object* of his *passions* and *affections* be *rightly chosen*. Let us therefore be persuaded always to carry this in our remembrance, that not only the *general object* of our *love*, and of the *passions* which are rang'd under it, must be something *good* ; and of our *hatred*, and the *passions* listed under its standard, something *evil* ; but the *chief object* of both must be the

^c 2 Tim. iii. 4.

the *chief good*, and the *chief evil*. Now the chief good is *God*, and the chief evil *sin*. This ends the *first part* of the government of the *passions*; they must be directed to a *proper object*.

2. ANOTHER thing implied in the government of the *passions*, is, *proportioning* the degree of them to the degree of *value* and *importance* in the *objects* about which they are conversant. We are not only to love God, the chief good, *more* than other good things, and to *hate* sin, the greatest of evils, *more* than all the sufferings and afflictions of the present life, (which is done by every *sincere* christian) but, if it were possible, *infinitely more*. And though this, strictly speaking, cannot be, yet we are obliged to use all the means which religious prudence can supply, for the awakening and strengthening these good *affections*, and to use these means with all diligence. Here there may be a *defect*, and, alas! too commonly is; but there can be no *excess*, at least not in the *affection* itself, tho' there may be in the *manner* of expressing it. We cannot love God, or hate sin too much; but we may think to show our love to God, or hatred to sin, in such instances as are *not required* of us; as by drawing out our *devotions* to a *greater length*, or *repeating* them more *frequently* than our bodily strength will well bear; by

expending in pious and *charitable uses* more than is consistent with our circumstances in the world ; and out of zeal to *mortify* the sinful inclinations of the fleshly part, *denying* ourselves what is *needful* or *convenient* ; though there is but little need of cautioning persons on these heads, they being exceeding few who run into the extreme now mentioned : on the contrary, it is greatly to be lamented, that the *superiority* of our *religious affections* is not more visible in the *effects* of them ; that it is not more apparent that our *affections* are directed to the *best objects* by the *degrees* to which they are raised, and the noble and useful *fruits* which they produce. It may be, though the ballance breaks on the side of God and Heaven, yet the odds is hardly discernible ; or, to make use of another similitude, and perhaps more proper, though the stream may run swiftest, and swell highest in the channel which tends towards God, yet the difference may not be considerable enough for us to be sure that it does. We should not suffer it thus to be, not even for our own sakes : for though God will accept us if we love him *more* than all, whether by reason of the *remissness* of our *affection* we know it or no ; yet unless we know it, we cannot have that *comfort* which the knowledge of it would afford us ; neither can we know it with any
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degree of reasonable assurance, except the difference in *degree* between our love to God and to other things be considerable. The more considerable this difference, the more easily and certainly is it known. As to *inferior* objects, *excess* in the *degree* of our *passions* is as *common* here, as the other extreme is in the things of God and religion : and as it is common, so hard to be avoided, even by those who are no strangers to the *grace* of God. This therefore is another thing which will require their most serious thoughts, *viz.* how they shall *moderate* their *common affections*, as well as how they shall *raise* and *improve* their *religious*. Both these designs are most successfully carried on in conjunction. The *moderation* of our *natural affections* will contribute to the *increase* of those which are *spiritual*; and the increase of these latter will promote the moderation of the former. Let us consider how easy it is for all to offend in this point. He who does not love the world, nor the things of the world, so well as to venture his *soul* for them, may yet love them *more* than he ought, and more than is consistent with his own peace. He who does not indulge his *passions* to that *degree*, as to be engaged by them in a course of *wilful sin*, may yet, by his too great indulgence of them, be occasionally drawn to actions which call for a

particular repentance ; and if he is not guilty of what is directly criminal and forbidden, may yet be guilty of what is indiscreet, and of hurtful consequence both to himself and others. Who then can reasonably doubt, whether this also be not necessary to the right government of our *passions* ; that we regard the *degree* of them with respect to the various *objects* and *occasions* which excite them ; and whether it will not demand some care and pains to keep them within their proper bounds. Among the *objects* and *occasions* of our *passions* which occur in the common course of our lives, there is a great diversity ; one object and occasion will not justify such a *degree* of *passion* as another will ; and there are some degrees of the *passions*, which no object or occasion whatsoever, relating only to the present state, will warrant. Some things there are which have so visible and immediate a connexion with the happiness of the present life, that we cannot help being concerned about them ; nor are we to be blamed upon that account, if our concern do not exceed the real value of the things, and make us appear as if we had forgotten that both the good and evil things of this life, being light and but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with those which are of a vastly greater weight, and eternal. The disproportion between

tween these things being considered, we should *rejoice*, and *weep*, and *hope*, and *fear*, with the greatest moderation. We should particularly remember these three cautions; not to suffer *any passion* to *prevail* so far as to be a *snare* and *temptation* to us; to *unfit* us for the *regular* discharge of our *duty*; or to *deprive* us of the *peaceful* and *innocent enjoyment* of *that portion* which God has given us *under the sun*; because *these effects* of our *passions* are certain signs of their being *excessive*.

I. WE do not *moderate* our *passions* as we ought, if we suffer them to *prevail* to *that degree* as to be a *snare* and *temptation* to us. Every one is obliged in conscience, and concerned in prudence, to lessen the number of his temptations, and to weaken their force as much as he can; since, after we have done all that we are able, the temptations which remain will be full enough to exercise our care and watchfulness. Perhaps I am under a temptation which I find it exceeding difficult to resist; let me enquire whence this difficulty arises; is it not from my neglecting to keep a strict rein upon *some passion* or other, which not having been used to be denied, is the more urgent and importunate, even where the gratification of it would be plainly sinful? Let us judge of the *degree* of our *passions* by *this* rule; do they cause us to offend? or tempt
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us to do it, so that we are in continual danger from them? 'tis an evident sign that they need a farther regulation. We should never let the stream swell so high, as with the least increase to threaten to overflow the banks.

2. ANOTHER sign of *excess* in our *passions* is, when they *indispose* us for the *regular* discharge of our *duty*, whether of the *duties* of *religion*, or the *common duties* of life. St. Peter exhorts those in the *conjugal relation*, to live together after such a manner, *“ that their prayers might not be hindered.* Whether in these words the inspired writer had an eye to those disturbances and divisions in *families*, which are occasioned by *ungoverned passions*, and too frequently attended with the neglect of their duty towards God, as well as towards one another, is not certain; the thing itself is too common, for *passion* to be an hindrance to *devotion*. When they are in such a temper, men either omit praying to God, or discharge the duty under great discomposure of mind, and without that christian charity and good-will, which ought to accompany all our addresses to the throne of grace. *Praise* and *thanksgiving* hold a principal place among the duties of religion; and yet, notwithstanding the excellency of the
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the duty in itself, and the many motives and incentives to it, things may so happen, that our hearts are not in proper tune for it, neither do we take any great pleasure in it. If we impartially examine how this came to pass, should we not find *this* the reason, that *worldly sorrow* had sunk our spirits, or *worldly cares* exhausted them? that the *love* of the world, or of something or other in which we had not our desire, had put us into a discontented, repining humour, which is directly opposite to a grateful disposition? We cannot but be sensible, that our petitions for spiritual blessings ought to be fervent and importunate; instead of which they are too often cold and languid: what is the cause of this, but that our *passions* are too much engaged by *other* things? Besides the *duties* of religion, some of which I have considered, there are a great many *duties* in *common life* which we frequently neglect, or perform after a very indifferent manner, because our attention is taken up by some *inordinate passion*, which makes us quite forget some things, and half do others: in all such cases we may be sure the *degree* of our *passions* is beyond what *reason* will allow.

3. OUR *passions* are *excessive* as often as they *incapacitate* us for the *cheerful enjoyment* of life, and of that *portion* which God
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has given us under the sun. Some persons are hardly ever easy and pleas'd, and perhaps are so little acquainted with the *nature* of true religion, as to think they have *more* of it than others, because they are *less* chearful and pleasant; not considering that it is not *religion*, but some *ill-governed passion*, if not *several* such *passions*, to which they sacrifice the peace and comfort of their lives. *God gives us all things richly to enjoy*, and they enjoy *nothing*; their breasts being *fill'd* with *passions*, which ruffle their minds, and keep them in perpetual suspense and solicitude. *Hope* or *fear* about what may be to come, destroys the pleasure they should take in what is present: it may be, every little cross event, every thing which is not said or done exactly to their humour, puts them out of temper; and because something or other of this nature is always falling out, they are scarce ever in the temper they should be in; for want of which, all the blessings and comforts of life are as it were lost upon them: and if this does not show their *passions* to be *excessive*, nothing can. - - - What is offered, may suffice to explain the second general head, implied in governing the *passions*, viz. *proportioning* the *degree* of them to the *degree* of *value* and *importance* in the *objects* about which they are conversant. If the *object* be *spiritual*,
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the danger is, lest the *degree* of our affection fall much *below* the mark ; if the *object* be of a *lower* kind, then the danger is of their rising *above* it. Our *passions* here are generally *excessive*, and may be known to be so when they prove a *snare* and *temptation* to us ; when they *indispose* us for the *regular discharge* of the *duties* of religion, or of *common life* ; and finally, when they *incapacitate* for the *cheerful enjoyment* of that *portion* of good which God has given us under the sun.

THO' all that belongs to the good government of the *passions* may, perhaps, be reducible to these two heads, of the *object* and the *degree* ; yet, that we may have a more full and distinct notion of this duty, it may not be improper to add some farther particulars.

3. THE government of the *passions* takes in both the *inward emotion* of the mind, and the *effects* and *issues* of it in the *outward behaviour* ; one of these, without the other, is not sufficient. We must not think we have the *passions* under *command*, when we are unconcerned about their *effects*, having little or no regard to our *words* and *actions*, but just to avoid what is apparently *sinful* ; nor yet, on the other hand, if we keep our *passions* from breaking forth into those ridiculous extravagancies to which they would lead

lead us, did we follow their conduct, must we therefore presently conclude, that we are without blame in the sight of God. In the first case, the *effects* discover the *cause*; and we cannot doubt that there is a disorder in the *passions*, when we observe it in the *manner* of a person's speaking and acting; for would any one say or do what was not perfectly agreeable with the rules of sound reason and common decorum, if he was thoroughly master of himself? Certainly no; these fallies of the *passions* in *intemperate language*, and *unbecoming actions*, can proceed from nothing else but their not being kept under a strict rein; for were they so, they would end where they began, in a man's own breast, and pass away unobserv'd, or at least, without deforming the looks and gesture, and setting the tongue on fire. But supposing we know how to keep the door of our lips upon some occasions, and to put on a calm *outside*, is this all that is necessary to acquit us? by no means: these outward restraints may be owing to the regard we have to the good opinion and praise of men, who we fear would despise us, should we appear to be unhing'd by every trivial accident. 'Tis a *great* thing for a man to be esteem'd one who is *in his own power*, and able to preserve himself from being toss'd by *unmanly* and foolish *passions*. But how is it
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it *within*? is there a tumult? are the *passions* in possession of the *strong-holds*, while we only command the *out-works*? In this case we cannot be said to have the *government* of ourselves. In the management of the external behaviour, some, who have nothing at all of religion in them, may, and sometimes do, excel those who are really religious, not being so visibly disordered as these latter are. This I call the *ornamental* part in the *government* of the *passions*, in which sincere christians too often fall very short, to the great prejudice of their holy profession; they yield themselves to the torrent, and behave so as to draw contempt upon themselves, and not seldom upon religion too. We must say to such, this is not walking as *becometh the gospel*; or so as to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour*. They should be ashamed to think, that considerations of *prudence* should do more with some, than those of *prudence* and *religion* both can do with them. But then, that I may give all their due, I must remark one thing more; that whereas the *effects* of the *passions* are of *two sorts*, viz. those which relate to the *civility* and *decency* of the *outward behaviour*, and those which fall under the rules of *moral righteousness* and *religion*; though, in respect of the former of these, a man who has not the fear of God before his

his eyes, may happen to outdo those that fear God, not breaking in upon the rules of *decorum* and *civil conversation* so much as they; yet, with regard to things of a higher nature, and more weighty consequence, all who fear God are much more careful than others: they are not blinded by their *passions* to that *degree* as to forget their duty to God and man; and to be guilty of uttering *profane expressions*, and doing injurious and *unlawful actions*, which is too often done by those who have not a fix'd *principle* of *religion* within them, what care soever they take in their ordinary conversation to show that they understand the rules of *good breeding*.

4. THE government of the *passions* must be *universal*, and not exercised over one, or more of the *passions only*, without keeping a suitable restraint on the *rest*. There is no question, that he who leaves *all* his *passions* *without* a *guard*, is in a worse condition than another man, who keeps his eye upon *some* of them: but where *all the passions* are not under rule and discipline, we cannot properly be said to have the government of ourselves; and shall also find it a harder task to subdue any one of them. Would we therefore be *perfect*, let us *keep our hearts* *with all diligence*, that no *one* irregular *passion* be suffered to abide there; while we fortify
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one side, let us not lie naked and expos'd on another : let us not guard against those *passions* which are thought to proceed from *ill-nature*, and neglect others which arise out of the *love* of *pleasure*, which are attended with as dangerous snares as any. While we are afraid of becoming a prey to *malice* and *revenge*, let us not indulge the secret workings of *envy* and *discontent*. Let not our *desires* be disregarded by us, while we are in some degree watchful, that intemperate *anger* do not surprize us. To how little purpose would it be, should we accomplish our design in governing *some passions*, if we ourselves were governed by *others*? all the difference would be, that we should not have so many masters to serve ; but then those we did serve would frequently clash with the law in our minds, and either make us do contrary things, or give us an unspeakable deal of trouble and vexation if we did not ; so that could we govern *some* of our *passions* never so well, while we suffered ourselves to be governed by *others*, yet, unless we are willing that both our virtue and tranquility should be very imperfect, we should aim at nothing less than the *government of all* : but in truth, unless we endeavour the conquest and regulation of *all*, it will signify but little that we carry on a war against *some*. The *passions*

are *link'd* together in their *nature* and *interest*, and mutually *lend* strength and succour, and *borrow* it. You would not be subject to fits of *anger* ; but is it possible you should be free from them as long as you let *other passions* get head, such as *pride*, *vain-glory*, or an *excessive love* of this or that trifle, which cannot be cross'd but you are immediately offended, and hard put to it to keep the *passion* of *anger* from taking fire ? You would gladly live free from immoderate *grief* and *trouble*, in the midst of all those changes to which the present life is liable ; but how can you reasonably expect this, as long as you give the reins to your *desires* after this and that enjoyment, and your *delight* in it ? Will not *grief* necessarily follow upon a disappointment of any thing which your hearts are eagerly set upon ; or upon your being depriv'd of that, in the enjoyment of which you pleased yourselves beyond measure ? Other instances of this nature might be mentioned, which you may gather from your own experience, if you will make it your business as much as you ought, to observe the motions of your own hearts. Perhaps you may be ready to think, that as to *some* of the *passions* no danger will arise from letting them have their full liberty ; but if any one was asked *which* of the *passions* was thus inoffensive, I fancy he

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would not be easily able to say which. What are the *passions* but so many *outlets* of the heart, towards the *objects* which surround us? Now if *some* of these *passions* are watch'd, and not *all*, will not those temptations which are kept out one way, seek to enter by another? What *passion* is there to which thousands have not fallen a sacrifice? and if they have been fatal to others, why may they not be so to us? nay, how can we be otherwise than in danger from them, when we are so secure and careless? The sum is, that a man's *ruling his spirit*, implies his ruling *all* his *passions*, and not *some* of them only.

5. THIS government of the *passions* must be *constant* and *habitual*: to be sometimes vigilant, at other times careless; now strict and severe, and then remiss, is but trifling in a matter of the greatest moment. The same reasons which should persuade us to govern our *passions* in any *one* part of our lives, will hold good through *every* part of them. And indeed, if we have not an *habitual* command of ourselves, properly speaking, we shall have *none* at *all*; the ground we get while we are employed in the management of our *affections*, we shall lose again when we lay aside the care of them; and so the utmost reward of all our pains will be, that we shall not grow worse.

Now, who that wisely considers his true interest, would be content to spend his life at this rate, in rolling a stone up hill, and then leaving it to run down again? By first swimming against the stream, and then with it, where is our progress? how are we ever the nearer, to what every wise person should aim at, the perfection of his nature, and a greater meetness for enjoying his proper happiness? Let me further take notice, that though we should exercise some *rule* over our *spirits* for the *greater part* of our time, and only *now and then* let our reason sleep; yet even this would not be sufficient. We must not have days or hours of *licence*, any such times when we leave our *passions* without law; for, besides the mischief they may do in these licentious intervals, they will prove much more untractable at other times. Let this convince us, that 'tis equally our interest and our duty to carry a *steady* hand in the *government* of our *affections*; to have them at *all times*, and on *all occasions*, under our direction: and for our encouragement, let us consider, that such an *habitual* command of our *passions* is sooner obtained than one which is every now and then *interrupted*; it being the same here as in other habits, whatever we would have to be *easy* in the *practice*, we must make *habitual*; and that it may become *habitual*, we must
be

be *constant* in it. 'Tis much easier to be *constantly* sober, and *constantly* just, than to be so in the general course of our lives, if we *now and then* venture upon an act of intemperance and injustice: the reason is, that every *contrary act* has a tendency to destroy the *habit*; and whatever destroys or weakens that, renders the practice of our duty more difficult. From all this it appears, that the *government of the passions* cannot be carried on with delight and success, unless it be *habitual* and *constant*.

6. IN the *whole* of this affair we must act from *conscience towards God*: the meaning is, that the *chief*, though not the *only* reason why we are desirous to keep our *passions* in *due subjection*, and endeavour it, must be this, that *God expects it from us*; that in *ruling our own spirits* we shall obey and please God, and do a thing which tends to promote his honour, and the interest of religion in the world. There is no need that this should be the *only* consideration by which we are influenced; *prudence* may have its share in producing this effect, but *conscience* must not be excluded; on the contrary, those thoughts and reflections which have the greatest weight with us, must be taken from hence. As to the most essential and necessary part of the *government of our passions*, the right choice of the *principal*

object upon which we place them, it is impossible that *conscience* should not be our monitor and guide. If we truly love God and heavenly things, it must needs be for their own sakes ; that is, because we are convinced that they deserve our love, and not because we shall herein serve some *lower* design : for when this is the case, that we make *religion* a means to some *farther* end, 'tis plain that the things which religion proposes to us, are not the *chief* objects of our *affections*. We must carry our regard to God and our duty farther than this : we must, in every thing which concerns the *due government of our passions*, be sway'd and acted by religious motives ; that it may appear that our *love* and *hatred*, our *hope* and *fear*, and *desire*, and *delight*, do *chiefly* regard things of a *spiritual nature*, and an *eternal* duration, from the care we take to regulate *these*, and all our *other affections*, in their out-goings, towards other *objects*. In a word, let us do every thing chiefly for the *sake of God*, and *Christ*, and *religion*, or out of regard to the *glory of God*, the *honour of Christ*, and the *salvation of our own souls*, and of the *souls of others*.

I HAVE been somewhat large in explaining the *government of the passions* ; but the importance of the subject, and its being so seldom treated, will be my excuse, if any be needed.

§ 3. WE will now proceed to consider some of those *rules* which may be of service to us in the *government of our passions*. Give me leave to commend the following.

I. LET us endeavour to *improve* our minds in *sound knowledge*. The *understanding* was appointed for a *guide* to the *affections*; but before it can perform this part as it ought, it must be furnished with *light* in itself. In a particular manner it must have *right notions* of all those things which are the common *incentives* to the *passions*. According to the doctrine of the *Stoics*, a famous *sect* among the *antient philosophers*, the *passions* did either *immediately consist* in *opinion*, or *depend entirely* upon it; so that we should have no *passions* if we were not led away by *false opinions*. Though this be not a true representation of the matter, since *opinion* and *passion* are two things, and where the *opinion* is *right*, the *passion* may be *wrong*, for want of serious consideration, and firm resolution; yet 'tis too plain to be denied, that *opinion* is the *usual* cause or foundation of *excessive passions*. We distinguish things into the *good* and *evil* things of the *soul*, and of the *body*, of *this* life and the *next*, of *time* and *eternity*. Let us get and settle *just notions* of these things with respect to their different weight and value, considered *absolutely*

lutely in themselves, and comparatively one with another, and often revolve these in our thoughts, and we shall find this single rule of unspeakable use. Do the *objects* of sense and time raise frequent commotions in our breasts? and is it not easy to apprehend what is commonly the reason of it? Did we judge these things to be *trifles*, should we give them so much power over us? And are they *more* than *trifles*, in comparison of those things which affect the well-being of our *souls*, and our *everlasting* state? are we not reasonable and immortal, I speak as to our *better part*; and what then are those things which we are to esteem of real importance to us, but such in which we are interested, considered as *reasonable* and *immortal*? What does not make us better or worse in our *moral* and *religious* character; or, as to the state of our *souls*, what does not promote or hinder our preparation for eternity, cannot be *good* or *evil* in a *high* degree, and therefore will not justify a *strong passion*. It may be, that which appears *good* for the *body*, may be *evil* for the *soul*; and on the contrary, that which is *evil* to the *body*, or so apprehended, may be *good* for the *soul*; our temporal interest may be advantaged by that which is a prejudice to our eternal, and so on the contrary. And after this, do we want to be told, that in all such cases our *passions* should

should not be *most* mov'd by *present* things? They are fine words of a *heathen moralist*, *Quid enim videatur ei magnum in rebus humanis, cui æternitas omnis, totiusque mundi nota sit magnitudo?* "What can appear great in human things to that person, to whose view all *eternity* lies open, and the *greatness* of the *universe*?" How inconsiderable a part have we in those things which are done here below? What is this earth, and all the affairs of it, to all the rest of the works of God? Yea, what are all the affairs transacted here, or in other parts of the creation, throughout the course of time, compared with the interest which we all of us have in *eternity*? *Eternity!* that *awful*, that *infinite idea!* which preserv'd more constantly in view, would so impress our minds, and so lessen all *other objects* to our eye, that the *passions* excited by them would become next to insensible.

2. If we would *rule* our *passions* well, let us *mind* the *government* of our *thoughts*. These two mightily promote and facilitate each other. The *government* of our *passions* smoothes the way for the *government* of our *thoughts*, and the *government* of our *thoughts* for that of our *passions*. But it may be said, is not this running round in a *circle*? Is it necessary that I should rule my *passions*, if I intend to govern my *thoughts*; and that I should govern

govern my *thoughts* if I design to rule my *passions*? Are both these necessary; and where shall I begin first? In answer it may be truly said, that we are to begin, proceed, and end with *both*. There are *particular rules* for the right ordering of *each* of these. Let us so observe and follow these rules, as to keep each in the path which *reason* and *religion* mark out for it, and then each will be a help to the other; the *passions* and *thoughts* moving most regularly, and with the greatest pleasure, when they move together under the guidance of a purified and enlighten'd mind. The *thoughts*, if I may so express it, are the usual *jewel* of the *passions*; and whatever temptations we might meet with to *sudden fits* of *passion*, generally speaking, could we *strongly divert* our *thoughts* another way, the *passion* would soon be over. Now that we may be able to *command* our *thoughts* upon any particular emergency, the best way is to use them to obey our call at other times, and to come and go as we bid them. Let not our *thoughts* lead us just as they happen to be led, by sense or fancy, or chance or custom; but let us *direct* our *thoughts*, remove them from hurtful or useless to profitable subjects, and oblige them to dwell a longer or a shorter time upon things, according as the reason and circumstances of the case require. When we make
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conscience of employing our *thoughts* in this wise and useful manner, and can *order* them to their duty after they have been wandering, we shall know how to restrain and manage them whenever the *passions* are in danger of being kindled by them. Besides which there is a *secret connection* between the *thoughts* and *passions* of the heart, so that the *thoughts* being preserv'd in a well-ordered state, the *passions* will be insensibly bettered by it, and not so apt to break bounds. Good *thoughts*, cherished and made habitual, will naturally produce a *good disposition* of soul; will purify, sweeten, and elevate the *affections*; and, under the influences of *divine grace*, beget such a love and approbation of every thing which is *good* and *excellent*, that whatever is contrary thereto, as all *inordinate passions* are, will appear more *hateful* and *displeasing*.

3. LET us *fix* this upon our minds, that the *truest* judgment of the *passions* is *that* we make when we are *free* from *them*, and not when we are *under their power*. Let us be well persuaded of this as a most certain truth; think of it again and again, and charge ourselves with the remembrance of it, that we may have it in a readiness for our use whenever there is need of it, which will happen as often as we are surpriz'd and overtaken by any *passion*. A man under *violent passion*

passion is a *prejudic'd* person ; his *passion* bribes and perverts his *reason*, so as to make that *appear reasonable* which is *known* to be very *unreasonable* by other persons, and is *acknowledged* to be so by the *same* person at other times. Let me be thoroughly possess'd with this notion of one in whom *passion* has the *ascendant*, (though it be myself) that he is not, for *that time*, a proper judge in his *own cause* ; let me be sure to remember, that things are not what they *seem* through a *cloud* of *passion*, being both magnified and misrepresented ; and that the *passion* is not to be heeded in the fair account it gives of itself. There is *no passion*, be it never so unjustifiable, but will be ready to justify itself, and plead those things in its justification which will *look plausible* enough in those *mists* which the *passion* throws before our eyes. ^f *Jonah* is a most remarkable instance of this kind. God had caused a *gourd* to grow up which greatly refreshed him with its shadow : *Jonah*, 'tis said, *was exceeding glad of the gourd*. But how fleeting are human joys ! a worm secretly gnaws the root, and the next morning the *gourd* withers : and now who so unhappy as *Jonah* ? he is faint, and wishes to die ; and when God gently expostulates with him, *dost thou well to be angry for the gourd* ? he replies quick upon his maker, *I do*

^f *Jonah, chap. iv.*

do well to be angry even unto death. So is every man ready to say whose *passions* are hot within him, whether he is *angry* with a *fellow mortal*, or *frets* against *providence*, or pines away under *sorrow* and *melancholly*; *I do well in giving way to my passion.* But did *Jonah* think so after the *passion* was a little laid, and he began to return to himself? or is any man, who knows what it is to think *soberly*, of the *same mind out of a passion*, that he is *in it*? Let me therefore, when any *passion* persuades me to follow its dictates, only allow my self time enough for this *thought*, what *appears* just and reasonable to me now is not *really* so; I my self should not approve it in another, and shall condemn it in myself as soon as I am capable of calm reflection. Would not such a thought as this, striking upon the mind, be of use to *check* the *passion*, and make a man heartily *ashamed* of it? Certainly it would: for which reason I should, often recollect this observation, that *passion* blinds the *judgment*; and hereupon should resolve, that I will never follow the *judgment* I am apt to pass upon things when *passion* of any sort has fill'd my heart; but *that* which I make of them in my serene and dispassionate hours.

4. BE careful to *observe* a proper *medium* in respect of *bodily gratifications*; not using too much *indulgence* on the one hand, nor too

too great *severity* on the other : of these two extremes the former is by far the most dangerous, and the most common ; but both of them are to be avoided. A life of *sensuality* gives birth to *numberless passions* ; for when nothing else is minded but pleasing the senses, and the appetites of the fleshly part, the *passions* grow headstrong and mutinous ; the reason of which is plainly this, that the *passions* being rooted in the *body*, are consequently fed and nourished by the *same methods*, as the *body* is pampered and rendered less fit to obey the *mind*. This rule of governing the *body* is of so much importance in the *christian* life, that the apostle *Paul*, who was not a person of so little piety and resolution, that he should need to be more cautious and apprehensive than others, made it his business, as he himself tells us, *to keep under his body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, while he preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away*. In persons of a *sensual disposition*, the blood and spirits are soon apt to kindle, by which means the temptations to a vehement *desire* of this or that *pleasing object*, to extravagant *mirth*, or to sudden *anger*, are harder to be resisted by such than by others. The unhappiness is, that when people have cherished such a disposition as this in themselves,

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by an *habitual indulgence* to the flesh ; their *reason*, which should oppose and vanquish their *passions*, becomes *weaker* in the same measure and proportion as *they* grow *stronger*. Whoever therefore would not be subject to the impulses of *violent passions*, let him be *temperate in all things*, and live in the practice of frequent instances of *self-denial*. Having followed this method for some time, he will find the *motions of concupiscence*, and of the *passions* depending upon it, to be much less troublesome ; he will not be so often tempted to transgress the bounds of *sobriety* and *moderation*, and when he meets with a temptation, will be able to overcome it with less difficulty. - - - Need I add, that while we guard against *one* extream, we must take heed that we do not run into *another*, and show the body too little favour ? Alas ! I fear the danger seldom lies on this side. We see *many* guilty of *intemperance* in eating and drinking, and other gratifications of the body ; but how *few* who *deny themselves* more than they should ? and yet *some* such there are, who do not act so much upon mistaken *principles of religion*, as from a sordid *parcimony* : but whatever the *principle* be, if persons do not keep the *golden mean*, but deny themselves what is convenient as to meat and drink, society, and other innocent relaxations, there are certain

certain *passions* to which they are peculiarly liable, and of a very bad kind too ; which may serve to convince them that they do not take the right way : the *passions* I mean are *spiritual pride*, a *blind zeal* and *uncharitableness*, and a *savage sourness* and *moroseness* of temper. This temper is so very unlovely, and makes men such bad company either for others or themselves, that they must be very much under the power of it who can think there is any thing of *religion* in it.

5. LET us make the *object* familiar to our minds, or *keep out of the way* of it, according as we perceive one or other of these tends to *abate* the *passion*. Love, and anger, and envy, are generally fed by *thought*, while fear lessens. Do we find in ourselves the seeds of *ambition*, of *covetousness*, of *sensuality*? are we inclined to doat upon the *pomp*, and *riches*, and *pleasures* of the world? do these things dazzle our eyes, and bewitch our hearts? Let us, like the *Psalmist*, ^h *turn away our eyes from beholding vanity*. If we suffer our *imagination*s to dwell upon these things, it will be next-a-kin to the *sight* of them ; our *passions* will be awaken'd, and we shall be *envious at the foolish* when we think of the *prosperity of the wicked*. We must therefore either not think at all
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^h Psal. cxix. 37.

of these things, or view them on the *dark side* ; for they have all a *dark side* as well as a *bright one*. Let us think of the dangers which attend those which the world reckons its *best* things, and the cares, and troubles, and disappointments which are bred out of them. *Such thoughts*, if we entered deep into them, would convert our *admiration* into *contempt*, our *love* into *indifference*, and our *envy* into *pity*. Are we inclined to *fear* where no fear is ? let us bring our minds up *close* to the *object*, in order to convince our selves that there is no ground for such terrible apprehensions. *Ignorance* is in this respect like *darkness* ; it breeds unreasonable fears and surmises, every shadow becomes a frightful spectre ; and we startle at the first appearance of that, which when we come to examine has nothing in it dreadful. This method would sometimes be of use to qualify the *fear of death* itself ; I mean to him who has no *just reason* to fear dying, having made his peace with God, and secured his interest in the promises of that *Jesus* who has conquered death and hell. This person is, perhaps, more afraid of *death itself*, than of the *state* which follows after death. There are not a few examples of *such a fear of death* as this which I am now describing ; and it arises mostly from *bodily temper*. They are shocked at the thought of the *body's*

being deserted by the *soul*, and then thrown into the grave, and there left to rot in silence and forgetfulness. But let them follow this thought home; let them recall it again and again, and they will in time be reconciled to it; or if not wholly reconciled, yet little mov'd by it in comparison of what they once were. " My *soul* must forsake this " *earthly tabernacle*; and will my *soul* *suf-* " *fer* any thing by this exchange? No surely, if it bears the image of God upon it; " for *the Lord knoweth them that are his*. Is " my fear then on account of my *body*? " does the imagination of the *state* which " *that* will be in *after* death strike me with " horror? Alas! that must be because I " only consider the thing as it *first* appears " to the mind; for when I enquire farther " into the *ground* of my fears, I soon perceive they have *no real* foundation. It is " not the *body* that *feels* while the *soul* is in " it, but the *soul* *by* the *body*. Or could " the *body* be supposed to have any sense or " feeling of its *own*, it would be only by " means of its *vital union* with the *soul*; " which union being dissolved, there is an " end of all that *seeming* sensibility which " the *body* had before. 'Tis the same to the " *body*, when once *dead*, whether you tear " or bury it; whether it be exposed to the " fowls of the air, or devoured by worms,

" or

“ or safely lodged in lead or stone, or
 “ artfully embalmed. That which con-
 “ stitutes my *body*, was once, it may be,
 “ *common earth*; it then felt nothing, and
 “ will be alike insensible when it again *re-*
 “ *turns* to its dust. Am I apt to regard
 “ theirs as the happier lot, who, being
 “ *found alive* at the coming of Christ to
 “ judgment, *shall not die, but be changed?*
 “ ’Tis true, with regard to them, *soul* and
 “ *body* will not *part*; but, as is very pro-
 “ bable, the *change* they will undergo will
 “ be *more painful* than we experience the
 “ *parting* of soul and body to be at *death*.
 “ The pain of dying, in all likelihood, is
 “ nothing so great as that we suffer in many
 “ distempers of the body; and generally
 “ speaking, it is soon over. This moment
 “ we are struggling with the agonies of
 “ death, the next we are entred into ever-
 “ lasting rest.”

THUS we are to make the *object familiar*
 to our minds; or to *shun* the *thoughts* of
 it, at least on *one side*, according as we find
 one or the other of these will be most ex-
 pedient, in order to *lessen* and *moderate* the
passion.

6. LET us watch against the *beginnings* of
passion. What Solomon saith of *strife* is true
 of other *passions*; ⁱ *The beginning of them is as*

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when one letteth out water : the breach at first may be easily stopp'd ; but let alone, soon widens, 'till at length the banks are thrown down, and the flood deluges the neighbouring plain. 'Tis seldom, if ever, any *passion* rises to its height in a moment ; it does not take possession of the soul *all at once*, but *by degrees* ; so that usually we have sufficient warning to think of our danger, and sufficient time to put ourselves in a posture of defence. This is very wisely and kindly ordered by *nature*, or rather by the *God of nature* ; since we should find it a much harder task to quell and restrain a *passion*, if we were always to engage it in its full strength. 'Tis true, the *passions* of *some* men are much sooner in a tumult than of others ; they are seized more at unawares, and more violently moved by them ; but then, as I just now observed, this many times proceeds from their not having disciplin'd the *body* aright : the *fleshy* part being too much *indulg'd*, the *spirit* is more liable to suffer *incurSIONS* from the *passions* ; for such surprizes as these we are only to blame ourselves. Ordinarily we may perceive *how* the *passion* steals upon us ; and if we are wise, shall take the alarm at the first appearance of the *enemy* ; for such is every *inordinate passion*. Let us not foolishly think with ourselves, that we will have the
pleasure

pleasure of gratifying our *passions* for a little time, and then, when they have run without bit or bridle, will curb and reduce them again. We are generally mistaken when we thus give a loose to any rising *passion*; and before we are aware, permit it to grow too strong for us easily to master it. How many, for the sake of venting their *passion* when they have been *angry*, have given their tongues a liberty to run on, till they have talk'd themselves into the *height of passion*; thus, as it were, fanning the flame with their own breath: which shows *Cicero's* advice to his brother, a man of a *passionate temper*, was very good, *That as much as possible he should keep silence when he was provoked, that he might not farther incense himself by his own words.* And there is the same reason why we should watch the *beginnings of other passions*, as well as of *anger*; for the *passions* not restrained, chafe themselves; and like the wheels of a chariot, take fire by the rapidity of their own motion. We may say here as the apostle *James* in another case, *Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!* the first sparks might have been easily extinguished; but after the fire has been suffered to spread, 'tis more difficult to suppress it.

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7. LET

† James iii. 5.

7. LET us conquer one *passion* by the help of another, either of the same kind, as fear by fear, and love by love; or of a different, as anger by love, fear by hope, sorrow by joy, as we see there is occasion, and prudence shall direct us. To overcome a *passion* which grows upon us, we may frequently employ another of the same kind with good success; as the fear of God to banish the fear of man; and the love of God and of our neighbour, to get free from the love of the world. Hear what the living oracle of truth says, ^k Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear; fear him who after he has killed, has power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him. We thank thee, O most blessed Saviour, for this kind, this salutary caution! Thus forewarned, we are more than half arm'd against all carnal fears: if men, or any other second causes, are permitted to do us all the hurt they can, all the hurt they can do us is no more than making this *short* and *troublesome* life somewhat *shorter* and *more troublesome*; after that we are for ever out of *their reach*, but not out of the reach of *Almighty power*: the *body* only is subject to the strokes of outward accidents, but both *body* and *soul* to the strokes

^k Luke xii. 4, 5.

strokes of divine vengeance ; we are therefore to *fear* that God who has power to save or to destroy both *soul* and *body*. Let us *fear* to offend *him*, and then we shall have no great cause to be afraid of any *thing else* ; because all things else are under his controul and direction, and, compared with his displeasure, are as nothing. *This fear* will rid us of all other fears ; and, which can be said of no other fear, it has no *torment* in it when duly tempered, being mingled with *divine love* and a filial *trust*. Do we find the *love* of the *world* begin to tyrannize over us ? or has it done so for a long time ? let us call to our assistance the *love* of *God*, of *Jesus*, or of our *neighbour* ; the *love* of *truth*, of *righteousness* and of *heaven* ; these *truest*, because *spiritual* and *incorruptible* treasures. This advice seems couch'd in those words of our Saviour to the young man, ¹ *If thou wilt be perfect, go thy way, and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasures in heaven, and come and follow me.* Our blessed Lord well knowing what the *passion* was which had the deepest root in the heart of this young man, that it was the *love* of *worldly wealth*, does therefore prescribe him this rule ; not only by way of *trial*, to convince him that he did not rightly

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know

¹ Matth. xix. 21.

know himself, but as a *remedy* to that inordinate *passion*, which was the disease and sickness of his soul. *Go and sell what thou hast, &c. i. e.* " Let the love of God and
" thy neighbour fill that room which the
" world now usurps in thy heart ; love the
" truth, which now courts thy acceptance
" by me, more than all earthly treasures,
" so as to be ready to renounce them all
" for the sake of it, and to dedicate all to
" the uses of charity and piety, rather than
" be entangled by these things in the pur-
" suit of a heavenly felicity, whose trea-
" sures infinitely exceed thine earthly inhe-
" ritage ; and then thou wilt be *evangelically perfect*, and not till then." - On the
other hand, we may, in combating a *passion*, borrow help from a *passion* of a *different kind*. Are we prone to be *angry* with our brother *without a cause*, or *beyond measure* ? let us cherish *brotherly love* in ourselves, as a most excellent and amiable *affection* ; let us consider the reasons we have to *love our neighbour as ourselves*, till we come to be acquainted with this *love* from our *own experience*, as well as in the *notion* of it ; and then, whenever our *anger* begins to grow extravagant, our *love* and *benevolence* will be at hand to check and suppress it. Is our *fear* of God *servile* and *disturbing* ? let us encourage ourselves to *hope*
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in his *mercy*; and to this end consider, that he has represented himself to us under the relation of a *father*, and directed us to pray to him as ^m *our father in heaven*, on purpose that we might lay aside all suspicious thoughts of his kind intentions towards us, and never doubt of his *favour*, while we are able to appeal to him for *our own integrity*, tho' under great infirmities. When we consider the calamities to which the life of man is incident, have we *fearful* apprehensions of what we may suffer before we go out of the world? let us endeavour to strengthen our *belief* of the *special providence* of God over them who *fear* him, and our *hope* and *trust* in his care: nothing more effectual than a regular well-grounded *hope* in God to overcome all irregular *fears*. Is our temper inclined to *sadness*, so that *sorrow filleth our hearts* upon small occasions, and sometimes we hardly know why? let us dwell more upon the *joyous* views and prospects which our *religion* affords us: let us think of the *goodness* of God, and how many things we enjoy, which are fitted to promote *gladness* of heart; that the *good* things of life are abundantly *more* than the *evils* of it; that the *good* things of it flow from the *divine goodness*, and even the *evil* things of it shall by the *same* goodness be made to contribute some way or other to our final happiness;
always

^m Matth. vi. 9.

always supposing that we ourselves concur with the designs and methods of his love towards us.

8. LET us not forget our *dependence* upon God ; and to beg of him, that as his hand hath formed us with this *variety* of *passions*, so by the same hand he would *overrule* their motions, and *guide* the vessel in this perilous voyage of life, till it arrive safe at the haven of eternal rest. *He stilleth the noise of the seas*, and he can quiet the *tumult of our passions* ; shall not *these* obey him, when the winds and the waves obey ? entreat him to command a calm in your souls, and to speak the word, *peace, be still*. Are you afraid you should pray in vain ? or do you think it is not fit to be made a subject of prayer ? but why not ? is not the *government* of your *affections* a matter of great importance ? don't you need divine aids to enable you to discharge this difficult part as you ought ? and whenever you need divine aids, is it not your duty to pray for them ? and will they be denied if you pray for them in a right manner, sensible of your need of them, with a resolution not to be idle yourselves ? And this puts me in mind of another advice.

9. BE *persuaded* that you yourselves *can do something*, I may say a *great deal*, with the help which will be afforded you ; and
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hereupon *resolve* to *exert* all the latent powers of your souls. Remember 'tis expected from you, not that you should do impossibilities, but that you should do what you can: you can *watch* against the *incursions* of *passion*; you can resist and fight against them when they invade your quiet; if you don't *strive* against them, you must not call this *weakness*, but *sloth*. The present life is a state of *trial*, in which, among many other things, you are to be exercised in the *care* and *government* of your *own spirits*. 'Tis a state of *conflict*, and you must not think to decline the conflict by pretending that you had as good yield at first as at last; since, do all you can, you must yield and be overcome. This is not true, for you can do all that is required of you; and did you engage heartily in this work, you would find that you can do more than you imagine. The use of this single direction cannot be easily conceived: men fancy they can do nothing, and therefore will not attempt any thing, but tamely deliver themselves to be bound by the enemy, and used at discretion. * *Seneca's* words are worth remembering (applying them to the *moderation* of the *passions*, not as he does to the *total denial* of them) " Would you know why we cannot do
" these

“ these things ? ’tis because we don’t believe that we can. We love our vices, and then defend them ; and had rather be at the trouble of excusing them, than shaking them off. Nature has been kind enough, would men use the strength that she has given them ; and collecting their forces, employ them in their own defence, instead of turning them against themselves. The *true* cause is, that we *will not* ; that *we cannot*, is only a *pretence*.” Observe, he saith that *nature hath been kind enough*, and so it has ; but then *grace* would be still *kinder* : only we must not expect that *grace* will do *all*, or indeed *any part*, as long as we ourselves do *nothing*.

10. IT will be of use often to *examine the progress* we have made in the *government of our passions* ; for we shall be ashamed to find, time after time, that we are but where we were at first. This will convince us, that we have not been vigilant in our warfare, and vigorous in our resistance, for then we should have made greater advances : and this conviction of our having been careless and slothful, will be a means of quickening us to greater diligence, and awakening our concern to do better ; at least, if we don’t do better, we shall leave off taking an account of our behaviour, not being able to bear the reproaches of our own minds, when

when we continue for ever at the same stay, if we do not grow worse. We should therefore resolve, that nothing shall divert us from examining our conduct upon this head ; and then, for our own peace sake, and that we may be able to bear the reflections of our own minds without blushing, we shall labour to preserve a greater regularity in our *passions*. Let us consider particularly how we demeaned in this or that condition, or on this or that occasion ; in such an *affliction*, under such an *injury*, and *provocation*, or on such *success* : was it well or ill, better or worse than in *former* trials ? were we more calm and resigned, more patient, more moderate ? If so, from hence we may know that we have gotten some ground, which will encourage us to go on.

II. IT may be necessary to *remember*, that the *reduction* of the *passions* is a *work* of some *time* ; but that the *difficulties* of it will continually *lessen*. We may otherwise be discouraged, when we perceive that the *passion* which we had *vanquish'd* upon *one* occasion, *revives* again the *next*, and creates us new labour and trouble. Let not this discourage us ; for in time, and by little and little we shall have established a dominion over our *affections* : after which, the *government* of them will be a thing of much greater ease ; and, except in some extraordinary

dinary emergencies, we shall meet with little resistance from them, comparatively speaking, in the ways of virtue; tho' we are not to think that the time will ever come when we may lay aside all our caution.

Finally, LET us reflect how much happier we shall be on many accounts, if we rule our *passions*, than if we have no command over them: what the particular considerations are on the one hand, and on the other, which should engage us to set about this duty, I shall enquire presently. I shall now only observe, that we should reap a great deal of benefit from reflecting on these things: for, as we are reasonable creatures, and *naturally* pursue good, and fly from evil; if we clearly see that the *government of our passions* is every way for our interest, and their governing us in every respect opposite to it; that one brings us to the enjoyment of the best ends we can propose to ourselves, and the other sets us at the greatest distance from them: if we clearly discern this, and often and attentively consider it, we are not such enemies to ourselves, or so indifferent to what concerns our own interest and happiness, as not to be influenced by these motives, fulfilling the dictates of our *passions* at the same time that we know and consider the ill consequences which must attend

attend it, and the many advantages of which we deprive ourselves by this means. It is next to impossible we should act thus, if we seriously considered the many and important reasons we have to act otherwise. 'Tis for want of reflecting oftner on these things, that men so notoriously counter-act their own interest and happiness, with relation to *this* life and the *next*. Whatever *motives* therefore conspire to persuade us to the government of our *passions*, let us think of them again and again, till we feel ourselves more and more affected by them.

THIS part of the *essay* has run out to so great a length, that I must not inlarge on some other directions which offer themselves, and which are too important to be wholly omitted. We should *watch against* the *occasions* of immoderate *passions*, and *avoid* them. An *angry* man should not needlessly thrust himself into *disputes*, nor allow himself to make free with the characters and conduct of others, because this will always minister fuel to resentment. He must therefore, according to the Wiseman's advice, ° *leave off contention before it be meddled with*. The man inclin'd to be *intemperate* in *drinking*, must avoid the *company* of the intemperate; and must not ^p *look on the wine when it sparkles in the cup*, and *moves itself aright*.

° Prov. xvii. 14.

^p Ibid. xxiii. 31.

Again,

Again, we should have a *particular* eye upon the *passion* which has the *strongest hold* of our *nature*, and if we can *turn* it to an *advantage*. For instance, a temper warm, and easily kindled, if a right turn be given it, may be of great use in *devotion*, provided *reason* always accompanies and directs it. Again, it would make the well-governing the *passions* in after-life much more easy, if the *parents* or *instructors* of children would begin *early* the right culture of their minds, and accustom their *passions* to a proper discipline. 'Tis no way strange, if a *child*, whose foolish *parents* have cherished in him every *passion* by a fond indulgence, grow to a licentious *youth*, and prove ungovernable by his parents, and without inclination or power to govern himself: whereas the *child* whose *passions* have been taught to obey the *reason* of his *parents*, will, when he grows up, find it easy to *keep* them in subjection to his own.

HAVING now seen what is implied in the *government of the passions*, and the *rules* which we are to follow in order to obtain it: why should we not all resolve that we will think of this matter more *seriously* and set about it more *heartily* than ever we have done? If we have ground to hope, that we make conscience of our duty in some other parts and instances of it, let us do the same
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in this also, and labour to be more perfect; that it may be manifest to ourselves, and others, that we have this expressly in our aim, to *rule* our *passions*, to assert the *supremacy* of *reason*, and to bring all the motions of *inferior nature* into a proper subordination to our *higher* and *nobler* faculties: in fine, that we are governed by *reason* and *religion*, and not by *humour*, and *fancy*, and *passion*.—— To enforce this exhortation, by offering to consideration some proper *motives*, is what I shall next attempt.

§ 4. AMONG various considerations proper to excite us to the practice of this too much neglected duty, I would particularly recommend the following. Let us consider the good *influence* which the government of our *passions* has upon the *exercises* of *piety* and *devotion*, on the *ordinary course* of a *christian's* conversation, on our *peace* and *self-enjoyment*, and on our *credit* and *honour*. Under each of these heads I shall show, that the contrary to all this is true in respect of *passions* not well governed.

I. WELL regulated *affections* have a most happy *influence* on the *exercises* of *piety* and *devotion*, whether publick or private; such as *prayer*, *meditation*, *hearing the word of God*, and *receiving the holy supper*. The christian whose *passions* are kept in good order,

der, is in a more constant disposition of soul for every duty of this kind, than others are. He is more himself, more composed and recollected, and enjoys a greater freedom of mind; so that when he is summoned to any duty, he can more readily set about it, more easily disengage himself from other objects, retire into himself, and ascend to God. While another, whose soul is under the power of any *passion*, but especially of *several passions* together, cannot presently disentangle himself; his *passions* have fix'd his heart upon this or that object, and it requires some time to separate them. Who now does not see where the advantage lies? There is no good christian but would willingly be at leisure to comply immediately with the voice, which calls him away from all other things, and secretly whispers to him, to turn aside into the *closet*, or into the *house of prayer*, and there converse with himself, and with God: but how can this be hop'd for, where the mind is hurried by *different* and *jarring passions*? yea, how can the soul, in the midst of so much noise, be sensible of the soft invitation? Where there is but a single *passion* which is not under government, there will be a crowd of thoughts from which we shall find it hard to get clear, when we would ingage in the duties of *devotion*. And then, if we consider the christian as *actually* engaged

gaged in those pious exercises, is it not highly proper and necessary, that the *mind* should be *attentive*, and the *heart warm'd and elevated*? Every one must own that this is greatly desirable. But alas! excepting the man whose *passions* are kept in a smooth and equal tenour, set upon their proper objects, and suited to the degree of excellence in each object, how few can be expected to perform the duties of religion after this manner? It is not so difficult for him to do it; for as he loves *God* more than all other things, and loves nothing else in comparison of *God*, and is not exceedingly attached to any *inferior* object; he wants not those *affections* which are necessary to raise his mind to God and divine things; and is, in good measure, free from those which would distract his thoughts, interrupt his devotions, hang like a dead weight upon his soul in his flight towards heaven, and weaken the impression of those objects which his *faith* presented to his view. Ah! how different is it in respect of the christian, whose soul is in that state of confusion, which is necessarily bred by *ungoverned passions*? with difficulty he lifts his heart to God, and with greater difficulty keeps it fixed on this glorious object; some busy *passion* or other thrusts in, and disturbs the whole exercise. Shall I add, that *well-regulated affections and passions* contribute to

the *delightful* performance of holy duties? This 'tis certain they do; for besides that what is done with the *whole* heart, is done with most pleasure; such a one is in that temper which is best of all fitted to produce delight: his own mind approves him, which is a very great matter; and being better satisfied with himself, he has more delight in *God*, and more satisfaction in every *duty* he performs; especially in the duties of *praise* and *thanksgiving*, for which a soul calm and serene is peculiarly disposed. Such a soul has the truer enjoyment of itself, and of *God*, and of all things else; it will therefore naturally enlarge itself in acts of *love*, and *gratitude*, and *praise* towards *God*, the fountain of being, perfection, and happiness.

2. *Well-regulated affections* have a most happy influence on the *ordinary* course of a *christian conversation*. A man performs the duties of his place with less avocation and disturbance; he can better judge what these duties are, not being prejudic'd by *passion* one way or the other; and applies himself more diligently and constantly to the duties incumbent upon him, because he is not biassed the contrary way. The question with every one ought to be, after what manner is it my *duty* to act in the condition and circumstances in which the providence of *God* has

has been pleas'd to place me? how ought I to employ my *time*, and all the other *talents* with which God has intrusted me? If I advise with my *passions*, they will certainly direct me wrong; or if I have not us'd my *passions* to receive, but to give command, they will force their advice upon me without being ask'd; and will be sure to admit nothing as an indispensable duty, which clashes and interferes with themselves. How impossible then is it, that a man under the guidance of *irregular passions*, should chuse his way right? Often think of this, that you will be guilty of frequent *errors in life*, and overlook, or neglect the *duties* which belong to the place which God has assign'd you in the world, if you are under the influence of any *reigning passion*; unless it be a love for those things which are *true*, and *lovely*, and of *good report*. Besides those *peculiar and relative* duties, which a man is better fitted both to find out, and to practise, who has none but *well-manag'd passions*; he is much better qualified for the *common* duties of the *christian* life, some of which are of such a nature, that none but *he* can easily practise them: such as *self-denial*, *forgiveness of injuries*, *patience*, and *contentment*; all which are standing duties of *christianity*, and of *universal* obligation. Every christian is bound to *deny himself*, to *forgive injuries*, to be

patient under sufferings, and *well contented* with his *lot*, whatever it be ; and these duties are not so very *difficult* to a *well-temper'd spirit*, but are next to *impossible* to any other. Others will be ready to object, *these are hard sayings, who can bear them* ; not considering, that what makes the yoke so intolerable, are their *passions*, which they have not tam'd and subdu'd. We are further to consider, that in the common course of the *christian* life, there are *many sins* and *temptations* which lie in our way, and that these do *most easily beset* those who have no *rule over their own spirits* ; which is the meaning of that observation of the Wiseman, ⁹ *He who has no rule over his own spirit, is like a city broken down, and without walls*. The world and the devil are continually laying siege to the souls of men ; and where the soul is not fortified by *reason* and *grace*, but under the disposal of *passion*, like a *city whose walls are broken down*, it is soon taken. And as *temptations* have the way open for them to rush in, so evil and corrupt *inclinations* to break out. In reading the book of *Judges*, we have an account of several wicked and lawless things done by the *Israelites* ; and the reason given for it is, *that there was no king or governor at that time in Israel* (which is suppos'd to be the time intervening between the *elders*

⁹ Prov. xxv. 28.

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who outliv'd *Joshua*, and the raising up of the judges) but every man did that which was right in his own eyes; which was often very far from being right in itself. In like manner, when the *soul* is in a state of *anarchy*, *reason* being dethron'd, and the *passions* let loose, there is hardly any sin to which a man may not be tempted, or any temptation with which he may not comply. The *passions*, like a rude multitude, are very unfit to be left entirely to themselves; and which is still worse, if they are not kept under by *reason*, they will keep *reason* under them: and instead of examining what is *useful*, or *lawful*, the man will go by no other rule but what is *pleasing*; pleasing, I mean, to our *fleshy* and *corrupt* part, not what is *truly* so; for *true* pleasure is only to be found in *subduing* the *passions*, not in *gratifying* them. Which puts me in mind of another *motive* to self-government.

3. LET us consider the *peace* and *pleasure* which attend upon *well-governed affections*. *Peace* there can be none where there is no *order*; as there can be no *order* where there is no *self-government*. The man who is at the mercy of his *passions*, and has his soul shaken by them, as a reed is by the wind, must needs be a stranger to inward tranquility, and, indeed, does seldom pretend to it. Why else does he so often complain of the

tumult, and vexation, and disquiet which he feels within himself? You shall frequently hear him talk of *flames*, and *wounds*, and *daggers*, and cry that he *cannot bear it*; which surely is not the language of a soul that *dwells* at peace. On the contrary, where there is a good conscience, and good order among the *passions*, God himself *saieth* to that soul, *Peace be unto thee*. And observe, both these must concur, that our *peace* may be perfect; an *approving conscience*, and *calm passions*; which is the reason that some good men are not without all inward disquietude. Conscience, it may be, pronounces them *sincere*; and yet because the other thing just mentioned is wanting, *i. e.* order and regularity in the *passions*, they are subject to great uneasiness of mind; tho' nothing so great as theirs, who at once labour under stormy *passions*, and a guilty accusing conscience. But *peace* is not all; tho' that alone be an invaluable blessing, there is likewise *pleasure*. Where *passion* is a *servant* only, and not a *master*, *passion* itself, in this case, *ministers to pleasure*. The pleasures of *reason* and *innocence* are not only more *pure*, but more *heighten'd* by these means. We enjoy all the pleasures which God bestows upon us, whether by the hand of *nature*, or *providence*, or *grace*; divine bounty *supplies* the feast, and regular and heavenly *passions* are the *seasoning*; that
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fills and crowns our cup, and these exalt the draught. When we *do well*, and *feel* all to be *well* within us, it is impossible we should not be *pleased*; we have *rejoicing in ourselves*, and are in a state of mind which bears some resemblance to the *blessed world above*, where there are no rude and boisterous winds of adversity *without*, or of passion *within*; where the *understanding* is clear, the *heart* pure, the *affections* compleatly regular, and the *soul* cleaves to God with its whole force; the consequence of all which is *perfect serenity* and *eternal delight*. There the conflict between *reason* and *passion*, *duty* and *inclination* will entirely and for ever cease; and when this strife is perfectly over, who can conceive the unutterable peace, and satisfaction, and pleasure which must ensue? He can form the best notion of this blessedness, whose *passions* are now most regular; because this man, by the very *temper* of his mind, has most of heaven in his breast. This present peace and pleasure are a considerable reward, a very great encouragement to strive for the *mastery* over our *passions*; and when we have gain'd it, to preserve it, and make it more and more compleat. Our labour will not be in vain if we unweariedly endeavour it, our victory will become more intire with time; and together with that, our pleasure
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and satisfaction will be still encreasing: we shall have a sort of triumph immediately; and when we farther consider, that in a little while more, our nature will be wholly freed from every *irregular* and *sinful motion*; our enemies all subdued, and we shall spend eternal ages in all the joys of victory and triumph, of innocence and fruition, of love and contemplation, of the most divine objects, and of the most perfect faculties; what farther can be wanting to render this *motive* from the pleasure of *well ordered affections* irresistible?

4. LET us consider the *credit* and *honour* which result from hence. 'Tis a great honour to us, both as we are *men*, and as we are *christians*; and it advances the credit of *religion* as well as *our own*: that we are our own masters, and not the sport of foolish and hurtful *passions*, is an *honour* to us as *men*; and the *contrary* is *extreamly disgraceful*. The Wiseman therefore saith, ¹ *That he who ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city*; and he who said this, well knew what he said, being *one* from whose judgment there can lie no appeal. *Solomon judged wisely*, though he had not always *acted* so; and the very reason why he forsook the path which *wisdom* by him points out to others, and which he could not be ignorant of himself, was, that he did

1 Prov. xvi. 32.

did not take *wisdom* but *passion* for his *guide* : upon which account, having himself experienced the mighty force of lawless *passions*, he had more than ordinary cause to say, *that he who ruleth his spirit, is better than he who taketh a city.* He will, indeed, in this respect, be *greater* than *Solomon* himself ; I mean, in that part of his life when he was so fatally deluded by his *passions* as to *follow strange women* ; and that he might please them, to *worship strange Gods too.* Here was an instance indeed of the power of *sensual passions*, which would have been *shameful* in any one, and was *most* shameful in *him*, whom God had endow'd with such an extraordinary measure of *wisdom.* Notwithstanding all this *wisdom*, was he foil'd by his *passions* ? Instead of thinking, how then can I, who am far from having the *wisdom* of *Solomon*, hope to conquer my *passions* ? let us rather reflect, what honour we shall get by conquering our *passions*, when *Solomon* was conquered by his. As *Solomon's wisdom* was greater than other mens, so were his *temptations* ; and if *Solomon* was overcome, it was for want of *making use* of his *wisdom*, and not because his *wisdom* was not a *match* for his *passions.* With a degree of wisdom much inferior to that of *Solomon*, we may govern our *passions* better than he did ; the thing most
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wanting not being *wisdom* and *knowledge*, but *resolution* : and *resolution* there must be, since this is the ground of the preference here given to him *who ruleth his own spirit*, beyond another man *who taketh a city*. The *noblest* conqueror is he who *conquers himself*, and not *others* ; the latter may not so much *deserve* the *praises* as the *curses* of mankind, being a scourge and a terror to his fellow creatures, a persecutor of good men, and perhaps a worse man than any of those who fall under his power. He *conquers others*, and after all is a *slave himself* ; a *slave* to his *passions*, which is much worse than being a *slave* to the most cruel tyrant ; *that* is a slavery of the mind, *this* only of the body. At best, the greatest conqueror seldom does any more than display his courage, which is a *gift* of nature, and not his *own attainment* ; whereas, the conquest of a man's self, is a conquest *atchieved* by *reason*, and owing to the *right* use of a man's *freedom*, which is the only thing for which he can deserve praise ; not to *chance*, or *fortune*, or to *constitution*, and other *natural* accomplishments. Here is *true magnanimity*, and *here only*. *Understanding* and *liberty* of choice, are distinctive characters of the soul ; *greatness* of soul therefore must consist in a right application of these, in its asserting the rights of *reason*, and *conscience*, and *religion*, against the

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the invasions of *lusts* and *passions*: and when it does this, it does not *want* power and authority, a crown and a kingdom, having *all these in itself*. But why is the comparison here made between him *who ruleth his spirit*, and him *who taketh a city*? would not the parallel have been more just and proper, if it had been said, than he *who ruleth a city*? The reason of Solomon's chusing to express himself in the former manner, may be this; that a man may be the *ruler* of a *city* which he *never conquered*; whereas, in respect of our *passions*, we must *first conquer* before we can properly *rule* them: like a warrior, who cannot bring a city to acknowledge his authority till he has taken it by force. And though the opposition between the *flesh* and the *spirit* is never concluded in this life, yet we may be allowed to distinguish a *two-fold* state of the *christian*, a *state of war*, and a *state of peace*; the former of which continues till he has brought his *passions* under, from which time he *rules his spirit in peace*, though that peace be sometimes interrupted. And certainly it is the *glory* of a *man*, when he has thus subdued his *passions* under his feet; such a one is honoured among men, as much as the contrary character is despised: for this I need appeal no farther than to every man's own sense of this matter. Suppose two examples,

amples, one opposite to the other ; one of them of a person who follows *reason*, the other of a man who follows *passion* ; one is *firm* and *unmov'd* amidst the various changes and occurrences of this transitory life, and can receive those things with a *serene* and *smiling* countenance, which quite *unbinge* and *overturn* the other. For which now, of these *two* characters, have you the greatest esteem ? which of them would you chuse to resemble ? Can you forbear having a *re-neration* for the *one*, how short soever your own practice may come of it ; and regarding the *other* with a secret *pity*, if not *contempt*, though, perhaps, you yourself are guilty of the same weakness ? And shall we *imitate* what we *cannot approve* ; and be *content* to have *no share* in a character for which we have the *highest esteem* ?

THE same character fits still more *gracefully* upon us, as we are *christians* ; because, as *christians*, we have *advantages* for carrying it to a *greater* height of perfection than we could do by mere *unassisted reason* ; and, upon this very account, shall be liable to much severer reproaches if we do not. The christian, whose *actions* and *passions* are both regulated by the *principles* of the *gospel*, makes a *most amiable* appearance ; which another who professes the *gospel*, but *falls* very short of those heights which others have

have attained by *reason* alone, has more cause to be *ashamed* than any one, because he *dishonours* the *two* best things in the whole world, *reason* and *religion*; and by dishonouring them, dishonours *himself* much more. A *christian*, and yet not maintain a *tolerable decorum* in the conduct of the life, and the government of the temper! furnished with so many helps and motives *above* the rest of mankind, and yet sunk as *low* into a life of sense as any of them; and as much *under* the power of *fancy* and *passion* as thou couldest be if there was no such principle as *faith*! *Faith*, which bears the soul that is thoroughly possess'd and actuated by it in a great degree, above the world and the body, making it *more than conqueror through Christ, who hath loved us*, and given us in himself a most glorious example of every virtue.

Finally, THE same thing is an *honour* as to us, so to our *religion* too: for when we see a man *meek, humble, contented, chearful, heavenly-minded, ready to forgive injuries, and the farthest of any from doing them; passing through the storms of life with an equanimity of soul, despising this world, and intent upon a better*; all which virtues are the result of the *due government of the passions*: we naturally ask or think, *how* he came to be formed to such an excellent and
divine

divine temper, and conceive an *high* idea of that *religion*, by the *doctrines*, *examples*, *precepts* and *promises* of which so extraordinary an effect has been produced. Alas! what a pity it is that it should not be more common. A *single* instance of this kind does *honour* to *christianity*; how much *more* honour would *numerous* examples bring! And what matter for lamentation is it, that instead of great numbers, there should be so very few who are concerned to *adorn* the *doctrine* of God our Saviour, by this and other christian attainments.

To these considerations, which I have offered as *motives* to the practice of this much neglected duty, it were easy, if needful, to add others. A man whose *passions* are *well governed*, never disturbs himself about *time past*, *present*, or *to come*; but *enjoys* every one of them. *Pass'd* time having been well employ'd, yields him matter for pleasing reflections; and having contributed to the perfection of his nature, and his preparation for immortal blessedness, he is not griev'd that it is gone; and that he himself is got so much nearer the perfection and happiness for which he longs. Knowing how to employ the *present* time well, and thus employing it, far from feeling it tedious, and complaining of it as a load, he enjoys it all. *Affections* exercised on worthy objects,

jects, *actions* directed to excellent and important ends, and *hopes* brightning and enlarging of perfect and eternal felicity, fill *present* time with pleasure : and as to the *future*, he is easy and full of hope, knowing it to be under the direction of that God who has been his *guide* and *friend* hitherto, and that, be it longer or shorter, its events will all issue in his greatest good ; and he may make the whole of it subservient to the encreasing his interest in the divine favour, and title to a divine and everlasting felicity, which his *well-regulated affections* center on as his great, and in comparison, his only important concern. - - - Again, a mind freed from *inordinate affections*, is the best prepared to *judge* of *truth* and *error*, especially in *religion* ; as we then see what is at the bottom of a river, when the water is clear and undisturb'd : into such a mind the *spirit* of *truth*, of *holiness*, of *consolation* will enter. The *divine spirit* loves a spirit like itself, *calm*, and *pure*, and *free* ; and having chosen it for its abode, will fix there, *never* to remove. The *Jews* have a saying, that the *spirit* of *prophecy* never rested but upon one whose *passions* were *well tempered*, who was free from *grief*, and *anger*, and *discontent*. This seems to be countenanced by the use of *music* in the *schools* of the *prophets* ; and *Elisba's* ordering a minstrel to be brought him,

him, after which, it is said, *the hand of the Lord was upon him*. What does this teach us, but that where the thoughts are composed, and unruffled, and the mind in a sedate and peaceful frame, it is fitter to receive divine and heavenly communications.

— To close this essay, Let us, laying aside all *excuses* and *delays*, speedily apply ourselves to the *government of our passions and affections*; and upon no account whatsoever, neglect what is *essential* in this matter, *viz.* a *right choice* as to the *principal object*, being chiefly affected and influenced by *those objects* which are of the *greatest* dignity and importance, among which I need not tell you are *God*, and *Christ*, and *holiness*, and *heaven*, and *eternity*. Let us *proportion* the *degree* of our *passions* to the *degree* of *value* and *importance* in the *objects* about which they are conversant; endeavouring to *raise* our *affections* in the things of *religion* (where there is no fear of *excess*) and to *moderate* them in respect of the *enjoyments* and *occurrences* of this world. Let us take heed both to the workings of *passion* within, and the expressions of it in our *words* and *actions*; that the *former* do not disturb the tranquility of our minds, nor the *latter* discompose our outward behaviour. Let our care extend not only to *some* of our *passions*, but to *all*; let it be *constant* and *habitual*; and
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from the beginning to the end let us act from *conscience* towards God: let us act thus, and we shall experience the manifold blessings of it. We shall have no ground to accuse *nature* for having given us *passions*, when they are thus under the direction and controul of *reason*; we shall find them of excellent service, and be more active in the cause of God, and the pursuit of *glory*, *honour*, and *immortality*; and shall do every thing with more spirit and pleasure, both in *religion* and in our *common affairs*, than we could without them. And if our condition will be better than of one who is supposed to have no *passions*, much more will it exceed the man's whose *passions* run wild, and without all *government*. In a word, let us take this for an undoubted truth, and as such print it deep in our memories, that every man is *wise*, and *good*, and *happy*, in the *same proportion* as he *rules his own spirit*, and *obeys and follows the spirit of God*.

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I N Q U I R Y

Into the true SENSE of

P S A L M viii. *ver.* 3, 4.



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Into the true SENSE of

P S A L M viii. ver. 3, 4.

*When I consider thy heavens, the
work of thy fingers, the moon
and the stars which thou hast
ordained; What is man, that
thou art mindful of him? and
the son of man, that thou visitest
him?*

THIS psalm begins in a most sublime manner, O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Such an exordium is suitable to a psalm of praise, and particularly to the subject of this, which is the celebration of the condescending goodness of God to his creature man, of which we never have so affecting a sense as when

we frame the most raised apprehensions of the incomprehensible *greatness* and *majesty* of that sovereign Being, who is pleased to have such a peculiar regard to us, sinful dust and ashes. “ O *Jehovah* ! by which name
 “ thou hast made known thy self to us
 “ the children of *Israel*, whom thou hast
 “ taken for thy peculiar people ; what abundant discoveries hast thou made of
 “ thy nature and perfections in all thy
 “ works ? so that all the rational inhabitants of the world, who observe the footsteps of thy *power* and *providence* here
 “ below, and take notice of thy *glory* which
 “ shines out in the *heavens*, and at the same
 “ time is but faintly represented by their
 “ brightness, can do no otherwise than
 “ adore and magnify thy name.”

OUT of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength, because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. This is very true, if by *babes* and *sucklings* we understand *literally*, *infants*, or *little children* ; for then the sense will be,
 “ The wonderful provision thou hast made
 “ for the human kind, in their most helpless age, is such an argument of thy wise
 “ foresight, and kind paternal care, as may
 “ well put to silence the ignorance of foolish
 “ and ungodly men ; who, if they only
 “ attended as they ought, to this single in-
 “ stance

“ stance of thy *providence*, could never take
 “ the side they do, fighting against God,
 “ and opposing and persecuting his people;
 “ and upon the least occasion ready to re-
 “ venge themselves, as if there was no God
 “ who exercised *judgment* and *righteousness*
 “ in the earth.” ^a *Thou art he who tookest us*
out of the womb; thou didst make us to hope
when we were upon our mother’s breasts; we
were cast upon thee from the womb. “ Thou
 “ wert our God and protector from the
 “ time we first saw the light. The *tender*
 “ affection of the *mother*, the *strainers* by
 “ which the *milk* is separated in the breast;
 “ from whence it *flows* as from a *perpetual*
 “ fountain; and above all, the *preparation*
 “ which is made for *drawing* it thence, in
 “ forming the several parts of the mouth;
 “ and that surprising *instinct* by which the
 “ little creature is *unknowing* directed to
 “ *suck* in the nourishment which *nature*
 “ has provided for it; these are all most
 “ remarkable proofs of the *existence* of a
 “ first intelligent cause, who framed and
 “ ordered all things with such consum-
 “ mate *wisdom*, that every species of crea-
 “ tures, and particularly mankind, are con-
 “ tinued from age to age.” But I rather
 think we ought to put a *figurative* con-
 struction upon the words *babes* and *sucklings*,
 and then the meaning of the *verse* will be,
 that

^a Psal. lxxi. 6. xxii. 9.

that by the *weakest* and most *contemptible* instruments, which, according to the ordinary way of judging, are as unfit for the design they are to accomplish, as *babes* and *sucklings* are to perform any work of strength; God frequently delights to confound the *malice*, and defeat the *enterprizes* of his own and his church's enemies. Thus was *David*, who was otherwise no match for *Goliath*, no more than a little *child* for a grown man, singled out for the conquest of that *proud* and *gigantic Philistine*; and 'tis highly probable the passage before us has a particular reference to that history. And whereas the *mouth* is made the seat of this strength, it may denote the mighty efficacy of *prayer*, in which the faithful have always placed their chief *hope* and *confidence*. It may, in this respect, be properly said of them as it is in another, of some described in the *Revelations*, that *their power is in their mouth*: by uttering the desires of their hearts to God in *prayer*, they can do wonders, while a shameful overthrow awaits the mighty man, who neither *fears* God, nor *hopes* in him, but *glories* in his own strength, and thinks he is sufficient to avenge himself: according to the exact translation of the original *Hebrew*, *That thou mightest still the enemy, and the avenger of himself*. This may be illustrated by those words

words of David to the Philistine, ^b *Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I came to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. My trust is in the true God, and my strength is in my trust, which I signify by imploring his aid. Our Saviour accommodates this passage to the children crying Hosannah in the temple; at which the chief priests and scribes being sore displeased, said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? to whom our Lord makes this reply, ^c Have ye never heard, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? The sincerity and unprejudicedness of these children, and the manner in which they were moved to acknowledge the Messiah, by seeing the wonderful things which he did, were a reproach to them; who, if they had been men in understanding, as they were in age, and in malice children, would have been sensible of the voice of God speaking by the mouth of these children; and by joining their bigger notes with the shriller sounds of the children, have filled up the music of the choir. The apostles of our Lord were comparatively but as babes. ^d I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that having bid these things*

^b 1 Sam. xvii. 45.

^c Matth. xxi. 15, 16.

^d Ibid. xi. 25.

from the wise and prudent, thou hast revealed them unto babes: yet, by these babes was the world conquer'd in a nobler manner than it ever was before. The minds of men were conquered, not their bodies; by the force and evidence of truth, not by the terrors of the sword.

THE Psalmist goes on, *When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, &c.* But why *thy* heavens? is not ^e *the earth also the Lord's, and the fullness thereof?* The earth is the Lord's; but not altogether in the same sense that the heavens are his: ^f *The heaven, even the heavens are the Lord's; but the earth has he given to the children of men.* The earth is the dwelling-place of mortal men; heaven is God's holy habitation, and the throne of his glory, where this almighty King is seen in his greatest splendor, and as it were keeps his court; attended with ^g *ten thousand times ten thousand angels*, who stand before him, and minister unto him. *These heavens, the immensity of which no thought or imagination of man, much less the most piercing eye, can reach, are the work of thy fingers; as easily framed and put together by thee, as we with our fingers mould and fashion any little portion of matter.* How great then is that God, who with so little labour raised this amazing arch, and therein placed

^e Psal. xxiv. 1. ^f Ibid. cxv. 16. ^g Dan. vii. 10.

placed those ever-burning lamps, which make so grand and beautiful an appearance in the night season; the time *when* this *psalm* seems to have been composed, which is the reason of the *Psalmist's* making no particular mention of the *sun*, as he does in the *xixth Psalm*; where, having observed that *the heavens declare the glory of God*, he adds, *in them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.* That was a hymn for the morning, when the sun by his dazzling light *bides* all the stars; whereas, when he composed the *viiith Psalm*, the devotion of the author was prompted by the sight or meditation of a clear sky, after the day-light is gone, and the *moon* and *stars* make their appearance, and entertain the admiring spectator with a different and milder glory; ^h *for there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another of the stars; as one star differeth from another star in glory.* The *Psalmist* was so transported with delight and wonder in the contemplation of this ample and beautifully diversified scene, that he could not forbear crying out, *what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

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IN enquiring into the true meaning of these words, I shall, among the several senses of which they seem capable,

I. CONSIDER those which *cannot* be contained in the *true* meaning of them.

II. THAT which, with *good reason*, we may suppose to be the *genuine sense*.

I. THERE are *three* or *four* senses of these words, which tho' they seem to offer themselves at first hearing, *cannot* be their *true meaning*.

I. THEY *cannot* be understood as spoken in *diminution* of *man* absolutely considered. *What is man, that thou art mindful of him?* In asking which question, we must not imagine the *Psalmist's* intention to be to represent *man* as a *mean contemptible* being, a creature of *no worth* and *significancy*. It is plain this could not be his design; because, in the very next verse, he takes notice, that God had *made man a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honour*; adding, *Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands, thou hast put all things under his feet*. And surely *man* cannot be a despicable being, who is *next* in order to the *angels*, that is, in the *highest* station but one of all the *known* creation, and appointed lord and head of the
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the animal world. If it be asked, *What is man?* his *nature*, his *original capacities*, his *proper* and *genuine excellence*? it may be replied, that *man* is of a *nature* greatly superior to that of other creatures. His *body*, tho' endow'd with great advantages above theirs, is the least considerable part of him; being only an outward garment to the mind, and the instrument by which it exerts a thousand wonderful operations. The senses of the body were only design'd to bring in *intelligence* to the soul; and the various members of it to be directed and governed by the thinking principle, so as to be subservient to the purposes of *providence*, the *benefit* of our fellow creatures, and our own *preservation* and *happiness*.ⁱ Cicero, a heathen philosopher, justly observes, *Eos humo excitatos, celsos, & erectos constituit, &c.* "God
 " has rais'd mankind from the ground, and
 " given them an erect posture, that while
 " they behold the heavens, they might be
 " capable of the knowledge of God; for
 " men are placed upon earth, not so much
 " in quality of *natives* and *inhabitants*, as
 " *spectators* of *superior* and *celestial* things;
 " the observation of which belongs to no
 " other kind of animals." The *soul* is properly the *man*; the *body* bears no more proportion

ⁱ De Natura Deor. lib. ii. § 56.

portion to the *soul*, in real value, than a hair of the head does to the whole body. The *soul* is an image of the Deity, to whom other things are related only as *effects* to their *cause*. Is God a *spirit*? so is the *soul* of man, a pure, simple, indivisible substance, immaterial and immortal. Is it the *glory* of the Deity that he is a *wise*, a *powerful*, a *free*, and above all, a *holy* Being? and is the *perfection* of his nature the foundation of his transcendent blessedness? in all these respects it may be said, that God has portrayed himself in little on the *soul* of man, to which he has communicated *intelligence* and *freedom*, a *self-determining power*, and *wisdom* to guide it, with a capacity, under the *divine influence*, of becoming *holy* and *happy*. Such is *man*, if he does not corrupt and destroy himself, for which he himself only is to answer, *great* in his *original*, *greater* in his *end*; worthy of *esteem*, with the improvements of *knowledge* and *virtue* in this life; much *more* when his *nature*, and all his *faculties*, shall be carried to their *highest* perfection in the life to come.

2. IT is not the aim of this question, *What is man, that thou art mindful of him?* to *lessen* man in comparison of the *heavens*, and all their *shining hosts*, which the *Psalmist* was then contemplating. It is true, the
heavens

heavens present us with something astonishingly grand and noble. ^k *Behold the height of the stars, how high they are !* consider well their *light*, their *number*, their *order*. It is only their unmeasurable distance from us which makes it impossible to judge of all these by the eye ; they are so many huge globes of fire, probably not unlike, in splendor and magnitude, to the sun ; but are so remote, as only to twinkle like small sparks of light : but will all this prove that the *visible heavens* are more excellent and perfect than the *soul* of man ? by no means. They may be more perfect in their kind ; but the *soul* is of a kind or nature far superior to that of any part, or the whole of the *corporeal* world ; being *spiritual*, *intelligent*, and *immortal* : whereas the material universe is in it self nothing else but a *huge*, *unactive*, *unthinking* heap of matter, liable to be run into confusion, or to be dissolved every moment. The heavens *know not* their own greatness ; nor the light its own sweetness and beauty ; nor the stars their own order : whatever there is in them wonderful or lovely, they have no judgment of it themselves ; they shine not to themselves, but to other beings, who are capable of perceiving them : for the material universe was not made for *itself*, being never the

VOL. IV.

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^k Job xxii. 12.

happier for its own existence, but for the sake of *percipient* beings, and of them *principally*, if not *only* out of regard to those who are *reasonable* and *intelligent*; that they may have the greater opportunity to exercise the excellent powers with which they are endowed, for the advancement of their own happiness, and the glory of their creator. The *particular* parts of the great system were *chiefly* and *immediately* intended for the benefit of those who are more immediately and chiefly benefited by them; but the *whole* for the perusal of those *nobler* creatures, to whose view the volume of the creation lies open, and who are able to look into it, and in some degree to understand it. And there is such a ¹ *spirit in man, the inspiration of the Almighty hath given him understanding*. The soul can converse with itself, and study and enjoy it self and other things; it is agreeably entertain'd with this vast spectacle of nature; can stretch its sight to the distance of the stars, and its thoughts much farther; ascend from one effect to another, and from effects to the first cause; behold the *light of truth*, which is much more pleasant than that of the stars, or moon, or sun; study *moral* order, or the order there is in the *actions* and *passions* of a virtuous soul; the order
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¹ Job. xxxii. 8.

among beings, who *knowingly* keep the station which the wise governor of the world has appointed them ; an order much more entertaining in the eye of *reason*, than any proportion or harmony in material things can be. There are degrees of perfection ; that which has *life*, is more perfect than that which has none. *Solomon* has observed, ^m *That a living dog is better than a dead lion.* That which has *thought* and *reason* is still more perfect, and the more perfect as it is possess'd of a greater perfection in *thinking* and *reasoning*. We are not to measure true greatness *merely* by the *space* which a thing takes up ; or true excellence and beauty *merely* by the *disposition* of the *parts* of which a body, or system of bodies is composed : these indeed shew the real greatness and excellence of that being, from whose *wisdom* and *power* all those things proceed, but not of the things themselves ; whereas the *soul* is in *itself* truly great and excellent, because capable of the *knowledge*, *love*, and *enjoyment* of its creator, the greatest and best of all beings.

3. I T is *not* implied in these words, that *reason* would *naturally* lead one to think it *beneath* the *majesty* and *greatness* of God to regard his creature *man*. The *Epicureans*, indeed, argued after this manner ; but they

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argued thus, because they did not believe that *man* was the creature of God; and denying *creation*, they would not allow a *providence*. There are likewise some *libertines* who pretend to own, not only the existence of a God, but his having made the world, and all things in it; and yet will needs have it to be a diminution of the majesty of God, a thing utterly unbecoming him, to take notice of what is done here below: but if it was not *beneath* him to create a great variety of beings, how can it be *unworthy* of him to exercise a *providential* inspection and government over his *own works*? It must be owned, that God shows great condescension in his care of mankind, as well as other creatures, and regard to his conduct and happiness (which will be considered presently) but there is nothing inconsistent with *true greatness* and *majesty* in condescending to do good. On the contrary, where there is *power*, it has been always thought a reproach to let it be idle and useless, and an honour to employ it for the benefit of mankind. It proceeds from this apprehension of the matter, that all the world agree to pay more inward respect to a man in a lower condition of life, who manifests a public spirit, and is active according to the utmost of his abilities, in promoting the welfare of his fellow creatures,

creatures, than to the greatest prince upon earth, who, abandon'd to his pleasures, drops the reins of government, and is alike unconcerned to right the injured, to relieve the distress'd, and to reward the deserving; to prevent foreign invasions, or to preserve domestic peace. One of these characters is universally *reverenced*, the other as universally *despised*. The notion of God, if we leave *goodness* out of it, will be exceedingly maim'd and imperfect. Now a *goodness* which is *never* exerted, whatever occasion there be for it, is *no* goodness: *being good* is necessarily followed with *doing good* as often as it is fit and requisite. From all this, it is evident, *natural reason* will tell us, that though it be great *condescension* in God to interest himself in human affairs, yet such a condescension as this does not at all dishonour him; but on the contrary, makes him appear more glorious in our eyes: and the truth is, 'tis not because they think it really unsuitable to the *greatness* of God to show kindness to the children of men, that so many shut him out of the affairs of the world; but because they *dread* the thoughts of him as a *moral governor*, who perpetually inspects their actions, in order to judge and call them to account. The *Epicurean*

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^a Itaque imposuistis in cervicibus nostris sempeternum dominum, &c. *Velleius in Cic. de Nat. Deo*, l. 1.

therefore complaining of those who hold the doctrine of a *providence*, saith, “ You
 “ have imposed upon our necks an eternal
 “ Lord, whom we cannot help fearing day
 “ and night ; for who can otherwise than
 “ fear a God who looks to every thing,
 “ thinks and animadverts upon every thing,
 “ and judges all things to pertain to him,
 “ a curious and busy God ?” They don’t
 care for such a *witness* of their actions as
 this, one who is *holy* and *just* as well as
good ; and therefore, under a pretence of
 consulting the *honour* of the divine Majesty,
 they deny God’s *government* and *care* of the
 world ; at least, they will not allow that
 from the height of the heavens he looks
 down upon this little spot of earth : if he
 attends to things *above*, yet not to things
below, which are altogether unworthy of
 his notice. But surely, when *man* is so ex-
 cellent a creature, in respect of the *nature*
 and *capacities* of his soul, of greater excel-
 lency than the material and visible heavens ;
 it can be no lessening to the *majesty* of that
 God, ° *who ruleth in the armies of heaven*
above, to do the same among the inhabi-
 tants of the earth here below. We are
 told, that † *not a sparrow falls to the ground*
without the will of our heavenly Father. And
 indeed, it is the *glory* of divine *providence*, to
 be

° Dan. iv. 35.

† Matth. x. 29, 30.

be thus *universal*, so far is it from being a diminution to it. It cannot be supposed then, that God will cast *man* out of his care, who is of *more value than many sparrows*, yea than the stars of heaven, and all the rest of the merely visible creation.

4. THE reasoning of the *Psalmist* does not import any *real danger* of our being *neglected* and *over-look'd* amidst the *immensity* of God's works. It must be confess'd, the whole earth is but as a *point* to the circumference of the heavens, in which the nearest stars are at an inconceivable distance from us; and stars lie behind stars to an unmeasurable depth. For who will presume to say how far the creation extends, and what are its utmost bounds? And if the *whole* earth makes so poor a figure, *when we consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, and the moon, and the stars, which he has ordained, what then is man?* a creature of a few spans long, who must multiply to many millions of millions, before he can cover the face of the earth, so as to fill it. What a small portion of space does *man* possess? and must not such a diminutive thing as *this* be swallowed up in the boundless extent of the material world, as a drop of water mingling with the ocean, and escape the notice of the Creator? The *former* supposition, of God's *neglecting* man, because it is unworthy his

majesty and greatness to stoop so low as to take any notice of him, *reflects* upon the *goodness* of God; *this*, of man's being neglected upon the account of God's having so many other things to mind, is a *disparagement* to his *omniscience* and *omnipotence*. To a *knowledge* and *presence* which is infinite, the heavens, and all their hosts, bear no more proportion than a single grain of sand. Nor is it any more *trouble* to such a Being as God is, to direct the affairs of mankind, at the *same time* that he has *other worlds*, and *millions* of *other* beings under his care, than it would be if *man* was the only creature existing. 'Tis because we *measure God* by *ourselves*, that we run into such imaginations. Great and little are only *relative* forms; one thing is greater than another; and there are things which appear very great to the mind of man, but to God the *universe* itself is *little*. ⁹ Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little ~~thing~~. And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. And what wonder, when he has meted out the heavens with a span, and the heaven of heavens can-

⁹ Isai. xl. 12. &c. 1 Kings viii. 27.

not contain him. Let the extent of the creation therefore be never so great, there is no danger of *man's* being overlook'd by his Creator thro' his own *littleness*, and the *multiplicity* of affairs which his Maker has upon his hands. Let us form just apprehensions of the *boundless essence*, and *infinite perfections* of God, and such thoughts as these will never disturb us. Whether we *pray* with others, or offer up our requests to God in *secret*, we shall not be tempted to question whether he hears our voice, and our *supplication*, because at the same time so many millions of hands are lifted up to him in one part or other of the creation; and he is serv'd and worshipp'd not only in *different languages*, but in *different worlds*: this one consideration, that the works of God are *great to us*, but *not to him*, will scatter all such doubts and surmises. The darkness and the light, the voice of multitudes, and the deepest silence, the widest and remotest regions of the universe, and a narrow closet, are all *alike* to him.

HAVING thus removed the *wrong constructions* which may be put upon the words, I proceed,

II. To *inquire* into the *true sense* of them; and it may be express'd in these *two* particulars. That the *greatness* of the *heavens*,
with

with all their glorious furniture, is an *obvious* argument of the *surprizing greatness* of the *Divine Majesty*: and that a *serious reflection* upon the incomprehensible *greatness and majesty* of God, as suggested to us by an attentive view of his works, will oblige us to *admire* and *celebrate* his *condescending* goodness in the peculiar care he takes of *man*.

I. THE *greatness* of the *heavens*, with all their glorious furniture, is an *obvious* argument of the *surprizing greatness* of the *Divine Majesty*. The scriptures frequently mention the *greatness* of God as challenging our respect and adoration. ' *Ascribe ye greatness to our God.* ' *Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.* ' *The great, the mighty, and the terrible God.* And wherein does his *greatness* consist? or what is the *foundation* of this honourable title, *the great God*? *Greatness* does not so much denote a *single* attribute or perfection, as the *high degree* in which God possesses all perfection. He is *great* in every view of him, because in every view of him he is *infinite*; *infinite* in all the perfections of his blessed nature, which distinguish him from, and exalt him inconceivably above all other beings. More particu-

' Deut. xxxii. 3.
ix. 32.

' Psal. cxlv. 3.

' Nehem.

larly

larly his *presence*, his *knowledge*, his *power* and *dominion*, conspire to make him appear *great* in our eyes, and strike us with an holy awe and veneration of him. *Thine*, ^u *O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven, and in the earth, is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.* ^w *The Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods.* ^x *He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.* Great is the Lord, and of great power, his understanding is infinite. ^y *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whether shall I flee from thy presence? if I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in Hades, (in the deepest parts beneath,) thou art there.* This is a glorious representation of the *divine immensity*, or *greatness* of God's presence, tho' the word *greatness* be not there made use of. And as the *greatness* of God is extolled in scripture, so 'tis farther remarkable, that we are referred for a proof of it to his *works*, particularly the *heavens*. ^z *Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations: for great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, he also is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the people*

^u 1 Chron. xxix. 11. ^w Psal. xcv. 3. ^x Ibid. clxvii. 4, 5. ^y Ibid. cxxxix. 7, 8. ^z 1 Chron. xvi. 24. - -

are idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

^a Remember that thou magnify his work which men behold. Every man may see it, man may behold it afar off. Behold, God is great, and we know him not, neither can the number of his years be searched out. ^b I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven and in earth, in the seas, and in all deep places. And if we rightly consider it, what more evident proof, or sensible discovery can we desire of the greatness and majesty of God, than the heavens, and all the shining worlds on high present us? must not his presence, his knowledge, his power, his dominion be without all bounds, who rais'd this wondrous frame? ^c who stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in? who telleth the number of the stars, which continueth to this day according to his ordinance, for they are all his servants? who assign'd the sun and all the other radiant orbs of light their stations in the heavens at proper distances from one another, kindled up their fires, and preserves them unconsumed? imprest their several motions on the planets, and both prescribed and directs their courses, so that they never wander, but keep the same

^a Job xxxvi. 24. ^b Psalm cxxxv. 5, 6. ^c Isa. xl. 22. Psalm cxix. 91.

road one age after another ; by means of which the innumerable tribes of living creatures which depend upon the influence of the heavenly bodies are perpetuated? 'Tis not improbable that every *planet* is an habitable world ; and that as our *sun*, so every one of the *stars*, has its attending *planets*, which are supplied from it with light and heat. And must not ~~be~~ be a great and glorious Being who does all these things? who has so many worlds created by his power, and hanging on his providence? Must not the *cause* be greater than the *effect*? Were God a *spirit* shut up in a body as our souls are, were he limited in his presence as man is, and could effect nothing but by organs, members and instruments as we do ; there would then be some room for the *Atheist* to ridicule the belief of God's having created the world as an absurd and impossible thing, as the *Epicurean* does in *Cicero*. " How did God build the world, what wheels, " what levers, what engines did he make use " of? what labourers had he to work under him? or how could air, and fire, and " water, and earth, be obedient unto the " will of the architect? " But all these are childish imaginations ; God is another sort of Being, and acts after another and more perfect manner. And if we would

De Nat. Deor. lib. i.

argue

argue right, we must not say as some *atheistical* men have said, God is like man, and no Being like to man could make the world, therefore the world was not made by an intelligent Being, but came together by *chance*. To argue thus would be against all sense and reason. We should therefore say, the world could not be more wisely fram'd than it is, if made by a Being of *infinite wisdom* and *power*; it was therefore made by such a Being. It could not *make itself*, and as for *chance* it is nothing but an *empty* name; 'tis therefore most evident that it was made by a *designing cause*, who knew and intended what he did; and the *excellency* of the *cause* may be gathered from the *greatness* of the *effect*. A single survey of the heavens, and much more an attentive and repeated consideration of them, is enough to convince us of the *incomprehensible greatness* and *majesty* of God.

2. IT is implied in the words, that a serious reflection upon the *incomprehensible greatness* and *majesty* of God, as they are discovered to us by an attentive view of his works, will oblige us to admire and celebrate his condescending *goodness* in the peculiar care he takes of *man*. I have shown before that there is nothing *unbecoming* the perfections of God in his providential regard to his *works*, and particularly to *man*: but what is not *unbecoming* God, may

may yet be very great *condescension* in him : for *condescension* being always measured by the *distance* between the superior and inferior, where this *distance* is *infinite*, the *condescension* must be *infinite*. It is reckoned a mark of great *condescension* for a very rich man to visit a very poor man ; and of still greater for a mighty monarch to lodge in the cottage of a beggar, who would be ready to cry out, *I am not worthy thou shouldest come under my roof* : and yet between these there is an *equality* of *nature*, tho' not of *condition*. What then shall we say of the *condescension*, where the *difference* of *nature*, as well as of *external state* is *infinite*? Such is the distance between God and us. * *Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high? who humbleth himself to behold the things which are done in heaven, and in earth.* The more elevated our views are of the majesty and perfection of God, the more shall we be inclined to cry out, *How great is thy goodness to the children of men!* and to say, *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?*

THAT our meditations may be more distinct, and proceed in some method, let us range them under *three* heads.

I. WHAT is man, frail, imperfect, sinful, stupid, ungrateful man? 2. What is

* Psalm cxiii. 5, 6.

man,

man, that God should show him such singular favour and kindness, as is here intended by his being *mindful of him*, and *visiting him*?

3. What is *man*, that *thou*, whose greatness and majesty the heavens themselves but faintly represent, shouldst be *mindful of him*, and stoop to visit him with thy tender compassions?

1. WHAT is *man*? 'Tis acknowledged that *man*, as to his soul, and in a state of innocence and perfection, is a Being of great excellence and dignity; but we would now consider *man* in another view, with regard to his *body*, as a fallen corrupted creature, and in a state of great weakness, indigence, and imperfection. In this view of human nature we can humble *man*, as much as in the former we exalt him. And indeed upon different occasions, and for different ends and purposes, it is highly useful and expedient to do both these; that the loftiness of *man* may be bowed down, and the haughtiness of *man* be made low, and the Lord alone be exalted. Let us now consider what is *man*, i. e. frail, imperfect, sinful, stupid, and ungrateful *man*. ^f He cometh up as a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. His *body* is only a little breathing clay, an handful of dust, fashioned with exquisite skill, but quickly and easily

^f Job xiv. 1, 2.

diffipated again. His strength is but weakness, his pursuits labour, and sorrow, and disappointment, and ^s his *best estate altogether vanity*. What a *wretched thing* is man! compass'd about with infirmities, beset with pain and sickness, perplexed with doubts, hurried this way and that by his passions, wandering in errors and mistakes; in a word, of *few days, and full of trouble*!---What a *sinful degenerate creature* is man! (I am speaking of *man* according to what he is *most generally*) his *mind* estranged from the *knowledge*, and his *heart* from the *love* of God; his *actions* irregular, his *affections* misplaced, his *faculties* disordered, the *whole* race corrupted in *some* degree, and *too great* a part of them *enslaved to vice*; the *best* not perfectly innocent, and the *worst* monstrously wicked! How little solid virtue and religion is there in the world! may we not say, that in some ages *righteousness* has been almost banished from the earth? --- What a *stupid thing* is *man*! he beholds the *heavens*, but thinks not who stretched them out above his head; he hath a thousand proofs of the *infinite presence* and *almighty power* of God continually thrusting themselves upon him, yet observes them not; nor is at all solicitous to obtain the favour of this glorious Being, or to adore and worship him! The *heavens* lend him their light, by which

^s Psal. xxxix. 5.

he travels from place to place, and pursues his diversions or his business; but has not his *mind* enlightned with the *knowledge* of God, to whom it ought to point him! ^h *There is no speech or language where the voice of the heavens is not heard*, by those few who attend to it, proclaiming the *existence* and *providence*, and *unrivalled majesty* of the God who made this ample frame, and presides over it: but *man* (I would only be understood to speak of the *greater part*) is sensible of no such *voice*, 'tis drowned by the noise of his own *passions*, and of the *world* about him! --- What a *stubborn ungrateful* thing is *man*! disobedient to the voice of *reason*, the checks of *conscience*, the admonitions of *providence*, the invitations of *mercy*, and the calls of God's *word*! not to be wrought upon by promises or threatnings, by a sense of *duty*, or of *interest*, by present enjoyments and sufferings, or by the prospect of greater to come! unmindful of his greatest *benefactor*, and forgetful of all his *benefits*! what is *man*, in this view of him? --- We may further ask, what is the *son of man*? Little the wiser or the better for the experience of so many ages before him, who approves the *sayings*, and repeats the *follies*, and imitates the *vices* of his fore-fathers! hears or reads of the dealings of God with

^h Psalm xix. 3.

former generations, to whom *those things* happened as for *ensamples*, yet receives no instruction from it ! sees them set up as lights to the mariner, yet dashes upon the same rocks ! If a foregoing age were as corrupt and dissolute as the following in other respects, yet in this every following age is less excusable, that they had the *examples* of the preceding to take warning by, and yet were not profited by them. *What then* is the *son of man* ? in what are the *branches* better than the *stock* ? the *children* than the *parents* ?

2. What is *man*, and what the *son of man*, that God should show him such *signal favour* and *kindness*, as is herein intended by the expressions of his being *mindful of him*, and *visiting him* ? What is *man* as to his *body*, that God should make him a little lower than the *angels*, and crown him with *glory* and *honour* ? that when his *body* is taken from the *dust*, his *soul* should be *inspired into him* by God ? that a creature, who makes a part of the *material* world, should also belong to the world of *spirits* ? that he should have the same *common mother* with the *beasts* of the field, and the same *father* with the *angels* of heaven ? All that is visible of *man* is a frail, weak, dying body ; but this frail dying body incloses a *soul* that is reasonable, and immortal ; a *soul* as much *superior* to

the souls of beasts, as it is *inferior* to the order of *angels*, who, notwithstanding their preheminance, wait upon him, and minister unto him : thus has God done to *man*, whom he delighteth to honour.---Again, what is *man*, or the *son of man*, that God should introduce him into so glorious a scene, spread so splendid a canopy over his head, and adorn it with such a profusion of magnificence ; *partly* that it might be the object of his delightful contemplation, and minister in various ways to his use and benefit ? for he ⁱ *appointeth the moon for seasons, and the sun knoweth his going down.* This seems to be included in the *Psalmist's* meaning, *when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained ; what is man, that thou shouldest be thus mindful of him ? that thou shouldest give him this pledge of thy special regard, that while his abode is on earth, to which he is as it were chained down by a heavy body, he can hold a kind of commerce with the skies ? that he has for this purpose a look not prone to the earth, like that of other animals, but more erect, and easily turned upward to the heavens ; on which, together with the eye of his body, he is able likewise to fix the eye of his mind.* This is a very great privilege, and so acknowledged by a

ⁱ Psalm civ. 19.

Heathen^k, who thus speaks to his Maker :
 “ Is it thy pleasure that I should depart out
 “ of this great theatre the world? at thy
 “ command I depart ; but before I go, I
 “ return thee all possible thanks that thou
 “ hast thought me worthy to be admitted
 “ to this astonishing spectacle, to behold
 “ thy *works*, and to study the administra-
 “ tions of thy *providence*.” Another *Hea-*
then, Cicero, in a passage before cited, takes
 notice of the distinguishing *goodness* of God
 to mankind above all other animals in this
 respect, that they are made capable of *con-*
templating the heavens. What are we fin-
 ful dust and ashes, that we should *lift up*
our eyes to the place where the honour of the
divine majesty dwelleth! that we are made in
 part for the *glorious contemplation* of heaven,
 and even for the *enjoyment* of it too ! For so
 it is, that we may survey the heavens as not
 only designed to entertain our *sight*, and em-
 ploy our *curiosity* for a few years, in search-
 ing out those distant wonders, and to render
 our earth a lightsome and commodious ha-
 bitation ; but as the place whither we are to
 remove when we leave this world, if we ap-
 prove our fidelity during our state of trial,
 and where we shall spend eternity in un-
 known delights. *Lord, what is man, that thou*
art THUS *mindful of him?* that thou shouldest

^k Epictetus.

so highly honour him, when he is so little sensible of the honour which is done him? not only *place* him at *first* in the midst of this vast and glorious scene, but *continue* him in it, notwithstanding he is so stupid as not to regard the operations of thy hands; though he seldom raises his view to the heavenly regions, seldomer to God, but delights to pore on things beneath, and with hovering thoughts flies hither and thither, loth to quit this stage of vanity and confusion, though he cannot find where to rest his feet?---What is *man*, *weak*, *sinful* man, that thou *makest* him to have dominion over the works of thy hands? that thou *hast* put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea and the beasts of the field, the fowl of the air, and the fishes of the sea, and whatsoever passes through the paths of the seas? as the author of this Psalm further pursues his meditations.

¹ *He causeth grass to grow for the cattel, and herbs for the service of man, that he may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart. O Lord, how manifold are thy works, in goodness as well as wisdom hast thou made them all! The earth is full of thy riches, and all these riches hast thou committed to the custody of man! 'Tis true,*

¹ Psalm civ. 14, &c.

man being a *sinner*, ^m the ground is in some degree *curst* for his sake; *thorns* and *thistles* does it bring forth to him, and in the sweat of his face he eats bread, till he return to the dust from whence he was taken. The earth does not yield its increase so willingly, or so largely, nor other creatures obey his command so readily; yet still this *sinful* creature is liberally provided for: the labour to which he is obliged is no more than necessary as a *preservative* from, or a *cure* of many vices; and he has the service and use of inferior creatures upon innumerable occasions. As it is, while *man* is at his ease, and advanced a little higher than ordinary, he is apt to grow wanton, and forget himself; so that the present state is as free from inconveniences, and as plentifully supplied with delights, as it can well be, consistently with its being a *sinful* state, and a state of *trial* for eternity. Lord, what is *man*, *ungrateful* man, that thou art mindful of him, who forgets thee days without number?---Again, what is the *son* of *man*, that thou visitest him? that notwithstanding one age treads in the steps of another, and will not be reformed, yet thou art pleased to *perpetuate* the guilty provoking race? that thou visitest him with thy tender mercies, and with life and being, makest them to transmit the same enjoy-

^m Gen. iii. 17, &c.

ments and comforts to posterity? Certainly we have not deserved this, O Lord, at thy hands! We have deserved that thou shouldest cut off *man* from the earth, leaving it a portion to the more innocent *beasts*! -- Above all, what is *man*, *frail*, *sinful*, *stupid*, *ungrateful* *man*, that thou shouldest *exalt his nature to such a degree of dignity in the person of his Redeemer*, and by that means fill him with such glorious *hopes and expectations*? This Psalm is thought to have its *ultimate* reference to the Messiah, and is applied to him in the inspired writings. ^a *In that he put all things in subjection to man, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him*: (the dominion of man over the inferior creation does not come up to the fulness and loftiness of these expressions) *but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man*. The Son of God humbling himself to become man, man is exalted to the honour of being a son of God; ^o *and if a son, then an heir of God, and joint heir with Jesus Christ*. And the *value* of the inheritance is answerable to the *dignity* of the relation: for the children of God ^p *an inheritance incorruptible,*

^a Heb. ii. 8, 9. ^o Rom. viii. 17. ^p 1 Pet. i. 4. Heb. vi. 20. John xiv. 2.

undefiled,

undefiled, and that fadeth not away, is reserved in the heavens; whither our forerunner is for us entered, there to prepare mansions of glory and felicity, for man who is a worm, and for the ^a son of man who is a worm. Lord, what is man, that thou hast chosen this way to express thy mindfulness of him? --- That which crowns all is what follows:

3. *WHAT is man, that Thou whose greatness and majesty the heavens themselves but faintly represent, shouldest be mindful of him, and stoop to visit him with thy tender compassion? [†] There are no works like to thy works; and much less is there any among the mighty to be compared unto thee; to whom the highest seraph, and the meanest worm bear the same proportion; between finite and infinite there being no proportion at all. And when this great God takes the affairs and interests of mankind under his care and management, must not his goodness and condescension be as great as his majesty, both deserving, in the highest degree, our admiration and praises? The comparison here is not between man and other creatures, some of whom he excels as he is excelled by others; but between man and his Creator, where we presently see there is no room for comparison: for who is there, that having contemplated the boundless extent of the di-*

^a Job xxv. 6.

[†] Psal. lxxxix. 6.

vine Being and perfections, can forbear having the most diminutive notion of himself, and thinking that the *prophet* has not fully express'd the distance between God and man, when he saith of God, that [†] *he sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers before him?* as indeed no words whatsoever can describe this distance, nor *thought* comprehend it. To the *eternity* of God the *whole duration of time* is but a moment, and *all place* but a *point* to his *immensity*; yea, not so much: *what then is man, that God should be mindful of him? and the son of man, that he should visit him?* Solomon having finished the temple, one of the most grand and magnificent structures that ever was, tho' he had the promise of God to his father *David* to encourage his hope of the divine favour and presence, yet, when he considered how unequal to the greatness of his Majesty any building made with hands, or even heaven itself was, he could not sufficiently admire the *condescension* of the Almighty. [‡] *And will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold heaven, and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!* [¶] *Yet thus saith the high and lofty one, who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and*

[†] Isa. xl. 22.

[‡] 2 Chron. vi. 18.

[¶] Isa. lvii. 15.

and holy place ; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. Let the *condescension* be never so amazingly great, men of a *humble and contrite heart*, need not doubt that God will not only *be mindful of them*, but *visit them* ; not only *visit*, but *dwell with them* ; and *dwell with them in order to revive and comfort them with his gracious presence.*

--- Before I leave this particular, I would observe one thing to prevent mistakes, and that is, concerning the *admirableness* of the *divine condescension*. When we say that the *goodness and condescension* of the supream Being call for our *admiration*, the meaning is *considered apart by themselves* ; for so considered, nothing can be *more admirable*, because nothing can be greater. It is natural to admire any object that is of uncommon grandeur and excellency, and much more then if the object be singular and unparallel'd, which is the case here : but then, though the *goodness and condescension* of God are wonderful in *themselves* considered, yet it is no way wonderful when we consider *goodness* as a *moral perfection*, and founded in *wisdom*, and therefore inseparable from the *divine nature*, that God should *thus condescend*. It is not strange that a *Being of infinite goodness* should *act like himself* ; that
be

he who is good should do good, and take care of his own works, and even forgive and reward sinful imperfect creatures, as often as he sees it fit and becoming him to do it. We may apply the same observation to all the divine perfections ; each of them singly demands our admiration, much more all of them together. We are astonished at the contemplation of the eternity, immensity, almighty power, and infinite knowledge of God ; but we are not astonished that a Being who has one or more of these perfections should have all ; that an eternal self-existent being should be immense ; or that a Being eternal and immense, should be infinite in knowledge and power. We easily apprehend, or suppose a connection between these, and all other attributes, which conspire in the idea of an all perfect nature.

LET me mention a few practical reflections out of many which this subject offers.

I. LET us more frequently consider the works of God, particularly *the heavens, the work of his fingers ; the sun which he has given to rule the day, and the moon to rule the night, attended with an innumerable train of stars, as they appear to the eye much inferior to the moon, but in reality much greater and nobler bodies ; all these has his hand made, and made in number,*
I weight

weight and measure. * *The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them who have pleasure therein.* There is a philosophical inquiry into the works of God, for which no one who has leisure and capacity for it is to be blamed, but rather commended, if it be managed with due caution and modesty, and directed to the promoting a spirit of piety; but no reasonable creature is altogether excluded from this search. A common understanding may receive much instruction from a serious view of the creation; and discern enough to produce a firm persuasion of the *being*, and *providence*, and *perfections* of a *first* cause. Did we sometimes make our thoughts dwell upon this subject, they would not rest till they had found out God in his *works*, though they could never find him out to perfection. The study of God's *works* is very properly joined with that of his *word*; from one of which there is an easy transition to the other; of this we have a remarkable instance in the xixth Psalm, which begins with a devout acknowledgement of the glory of God in his *works*, (*The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work*) and continues in this strain to the 7th verse; where the Psalmist proceeds to consider and celebrate the excellencies of God's *word*; *The*

* Psal. cxi. 2.

law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The works and word of God will mutually lend light one to the other; and the *mixed knowledge*, which is derived from them in conjunction, will yield great satisfaction to a thoughtful and well-disposed mind.

2. LET us glorify God for his *super-eminent greatness* and *majesty*: let us endeavour to have our minds possess'd with the most enlarged apprehensions, and the most awful sense of it; and these will naturally express themselves in a suitable manner in our actions and behaviour. In our *common conversation* we shall be so influenced by these right *notions* of God, and right *affections* towards him, as never to speak of this great and glorious Being but with *reverence*; so far shall we be from a disposition to trifle with his tremendous name, to use it in *profane oaths* and *curses*, or to break our *jests* upon religion. We shall be also less likely to forget God, and to do any thing whereby we may displease him; when our souls are possess'd with a deep sense of his *infinite power*, and *presence*, and *knowledge*. In this case we shall *stand in awe* and not *sin* against him. --- And not less in our *religious actions* and *duties*, but rather more, shall we find the use of this inward sense of the
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the divine *greatness* and *majesty*. Are we to approach God in acts of *worship*? his terrors will make us afraid to give way to carelessness and indevotion of spirit; our minds will be seized with a holy dread, our thoughts restrain'd from wandering, and our behaviour compos'd to an unaffected seriousness: remembring with whom we have to do, we shall not be in so much danger of giving offence to others by any improprieties in our demeanour, while we are before God, or drawing upon our selves the reproaches of our own minds; by this means, every duty we perform will afford us more present satisfaction, more pleasure in the review, and more advantage in the effects and consequences of it. And indeed, such an abiding conviction as this I am recommending of the *divine greatness*, is no more than necessary to repress the levity of some tempers; for which reason I would, in a particular manner, advise such persons to season their minds with *thoughts* of this nature.

3. LET us give God the *glory* of his *goodness* and *condescension*, both to *man in general*, and to *ourselves in particular*.

1. To *man in general*, for whom God has made abundant provision of the good things of this life; ^y giving them rain from heaven,

^y Acts xiv. 17.

heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filling their hearts with food and gladness. God's special regard to mankind, as the children of his family, is visible to the most careless observer; who, if not void of all thought, cannot but take notice how all things about us are so ordered, as to be subservient to our use and benefit. And as the apostle *Paul* reasons in another case, having cited the law which forbade muzzling the mouth of the ox which treadeth out the corn, ² Does God take care for oxen? or saith he it altogether for our sakes? for our sakes, no doubt this is written: so we may say here, Doth God take care of the body? and has he respect only to that? or is the soul the principal object of his care? and is it for the sake of that chiefly that providence has done so much to guard and accommodate this bodily life? doubtless it is. We see all men share in the bounties of providence, and we cannot therefore reasonably think that any are excluded from all possibility of obtaining the grace of God. A juster notion of the works of God, would contribute to give us more generous sentiments in this matter. Is it agreeable to the grandeur of God's works, and much more to the grandeur of his perfections, particularly of his goodness, which is diffused like the influences of

² 1 Cor. ix. 10.

the heavens over the creation? Is it agreeable to these, and to his *relation* of *Creator* and *Preserver*, which he bears in common to *all* mankind, to form such *narrow notions* as some do of his *grace*; who suppose the *mercy* of God and the *merits* of Christ's death to be *infinite*, and yet at the same time *limit* the effects of both, without any reason for it, either in the *nature of things*, or in the *word of God*? *When we consider the heavens, the work of God's fingers, the moon and the stars which he has ordained*; have we the greatest reason to cry out, *What is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man, that thou visitest him*? this must be upon supposition that God does not provide for the *body*, and altogether neglect the *soul*; for surely that God has given us souls *capable* of life and immortality, but has with-held from the greater part of mankind the *means* and *hopes* of enjoying any happiness beyond and greater than that of the *present life*, are things hardly consistent one with the other. And especially may we thus reason in respect of those to whom the gospel is revealed; when *all* have the same *outward means* of *grace*, the same *invitations*, and the same *motives*: that God should confine his *inward assistance* necessary to render all the rest effectual to a *few*, only to show his *arbitrary pleasure*;

when the contrary proceeding would represent his *goodness* in the most amiable light, and make it appear most worthy of God, and suitable to his *infinite greatness*; is a thing so unlikely, that nothing less than the whole current of Scripture, plainly bearing that way, is sufficient to induce us to believe it: whereas, thanks be to God, there is no doctrine *more plainly* revealed in scripture than that of *universal redemption*.

2. LET us give God the glory of his *goodness* and *condescension* to ourselves in particular. ^a *How precious have his thoughts of mercy towards us been! how great has been the sum of them! if we would reckon them up, they are more than can be numbered.* Instances occur every day and every moment of his kind remembrance of us; 'tis because he remembers us, that our souls have not long since dwelt in silence and forgetfulness: his *providence* at once *supplies* the comforts of life, and *guards* them too; defends us from innumerable evils, and from death, which in a variety of shapes besets our goings. ^b *He hath granted us life and favour, and his visitation has preserved our spirit.* Hath he not visited us in our temptations, and troubles, and afflictions; ^c *restoring our souls, and leading them in the*

^a Psal. cxxxix. 17, 18.

^b Job x. 12.

^c Psal. xxiii. 3.

paths of righteousness for his name's sake? But it may be said, he does not always visit us in mercy, but ^d *visits our transgressions with a rod, and our iniquity with stripes.* And what then? as long as he does not take his loving-kindness from us, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail. The mercy of God is shown in sending an affliction when it is needful, as well as in removing it when the proper time for removing it is come. 'Tis our happiness which God designs, in all the dispensations of his providence; and whatever the means be that promote this good end, we have reason to be thankful for them: nay, we should esteem it an instance of God's fatherly love and gracious condescension, that he will take us under his tuition and discipline, and chasten us as often as we need correction; saying as Job, ^e *What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thy heart upon him? that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?* that God should make use of such various methods, and leave no way untried to bring us home unto himself; to reduce us to a just sense of our own weakness and emptiness, and that of other things; and to engage us to mind in earnest the things which belong to our everlasting peace?

^d Psal. lxxxix. 32, 33. ^e Job vii. 17, 18.

To conclude, Let us not only *acknowledge* the wonderful *condescension* of the great God, in his goodness to man in *general*, and to us in *particular* (this *alone* is not giving him the *glory* due for his goodness) but let us continually *act and behave* under the influence of the *divine benefits*. As God abounds in the expressions of his kindness and compassion to us, let us abound in thanksgivings, and in all the *fruits of holiness*, and *goodness*, and *condescension*, which are by Christ, to the *glory and praise of God*. It will be bad indeed, if all the favours of God be lost upon us, and we show by our behaviour that we have not God in all our thoughts; or that our thoughts of God, if we have any, are of no influence to restrain us from evil actions, or prompt us to those which are good; but we follow our own fancies and inclinations, just as if there was no God in heaven, or none that was mindful of us upon earth. If, when we think of the *greatness and goodness of God*, we may well say as the *Psalmist*, *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?* what shall we say of those, who, after they have received a thousand testimonies of this *condescending goodness* of God to them, are not at all affected by it, so as to make him the least returns of gratitude and obedience?

What

What are such persons but a disgrace to the human kind ; not deserving the name of *men*, of *reasonable beings*, and unworthy of the *least* regard from *God*? God honours man by taking him under the charge of his vigilant *providence* ; they daily and hourly dishonour God. God forbid we should not know how to make a better use of the meditation we have been now upon : it should often return into our minds, and produce a zeal to order our whole conversation after such a manner, that tho' we are not, and cannot be, properly *deserving* of all that *kindness* and *mercy* which the Maker of heaven and earth is pleased to shew us ; yet we may have a *meetness* to partake of his favours, and improve them all to his *glory*, and to our *final happiness* in the world to come ; where the fullest communications of his *goodness* will cause us, with rapture unknown before, to cry out, *What is man, that thou art thus mindful of him ?*



A N
I N Q U I R Y

Into the true SENSE of

MATTHEW xxvii. *ver.* 46.



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MATTHEW XXIV 46

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A N
I N Q U I R Y

Into the true SENSE of

MATTH. xxvii. 46.

And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

THE crucifixion of the Son of God, taken with all its circumstances, is the most surprizing event that ever was. 'Tis wonderful to think that so great and divine a person should come down into our world; still more wonderful to consider the humble form in which he appeared, and the entertainment he met with. ^a He came to his own, and his own received him not; they who should have revered, despised, hated, and put him to death. But the most wonderful thing of all is, that the holy and righteous God should seem to countenance

^a John i. 11.

the

the *injustice* of men, and leave the person whom he loved best of all the beings capable of bearing his image, in the hands of his most cruel and implacable enemies. The taunts and insults of the changeable multitude, as he hung upon the cross, and of their wicked *priests* and proud *rulers*, moved him little ; but here he cries out as one overcome with grief and astonishment, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* “ At my apprehension my disciples ^b *forsook* me and *fled*, and I am now forsaken of all the world, no help or succour nigh ; but do not thou forsake me, O my Father ! let me not be as one whom thou hast cast off ; as one who has no interest in thy favour and approbation ; no title to thy compassion !” This complaint is borrowed from the xxii^d *Psal*m, which begins with these words, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring ?* And if it be asked, why our Saviour chose to express himself on this occasion, in the language of *David*, two probable reasons may be given for this.

I. THAT the *Jews* might call to mind the great *resemblance* between his case, and that of this *illustrious king* and *prophet*. The time was, when his ^c *adversaries* were *chief*,

^b Matth. xxvi. 56.

^c Psal. lxix. 4.

and

and his enemies prosperous ; but as for himself, he saith, ^d *That he was a worm, and no man ; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All that saw him laughed him to scorn ; they shot out the lip, they shook the head, saying, he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him ; let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.* So that when our Lord's crucifiers upbraid him in his sufferings, *he trusted in God, let him deliver him now, if he will have him ;* they reviled him just after the same manner as *David's* enemies did him : and that the parallel might be still the more remarkable, as they imitated the language of *David's* enemies, *he* takes the words of *David* himself, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ?* in which he intimates a *likeness* of characters between *David* and himself, and between the enemies of that good man, and his own. In both cases *innocence* and *virtue* were borne down by *violence*, and eclipsed under a cloud of *sufferings* ; while the wicked triumphed, and *the vilest of men were exalted.* Could the *Jews* argue from the *power* and *success* which heaven, for wise reasons, had allow'd them, to the *righteousness* of their cause ? no more than the *sons of violence* in the *Psalmist's* days could, from the like topic,

^d Psal. xxii. 6, 7, 8.

infer the *justice* of theirs: or could they reasonably *object against Christ*, that if he had been a *just* man, God would have redeemed him from his distress? such an objection can have nothing in it, or must fall as heavily upon the royal *Psalmist*, who made the *same* complaint of being *forsaken*, and in the same passionate expressions as our *Saviour* here does. They must therefore condemn *both* as hated and rejected of God, or *neither*.

2. THE other *reason* of Christ's taking the words of this *Psalm* might be, that *this Psalm* was allowed to *belong* to the *Messiah*, and to have its *ultimate* completion in him. Thus was it *foretold*, that the *Messiah* should *suffer*; and thus did *David*, who was a *type* of his greater Son, being moved by a *prophetic spirit*, describe his pressures and complaints in words which did likewise suit the *antitype*, and were *some* of them *more* exactly fulfilled in *him*, than they were in the *type*; particularly these remarkable words, *they pierced my hands and my feet*; which can only be understood in a very *figurative* sense, as applied to king *David*, but had a literal accomplishment in Christ. To signify that he was *the person* foretold in this *Psalm*, our dying Lord makes the complaint his *own*; and thus, after his *crucifiers* had

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as it were challenged him to make good his title to this character: * *If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.* In this challenge the *chief priests*, and *scribes*, and *elders*, joined with the multitude, saying, *be saved others, himself he cannot save. If he be the king of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.* These two, the *Son of God*, and the *king of Israel*, were among the titles of the *Messiah*, or *Christ*. To this challenge Christ as it were answers, by complaining to God in the words of that *Psalms*, which had its *chief* reference to the *Messiah*, and making the very *same* complaint which it was predicted the *Messiah* should make; hereby as it were witnessing with his *dying breath* to the truth of his mission, which it is incredible he would have done, if he had not been the person he pretended to be. In our farther meditations on this *mournful complaint* of our Blessed Saviour, let us

I. CONSIDER the *style* he makes use of, in addressing himself to God, *My God, my God.*

II. THE *import* of this sad *complaint*, or lamentation, of the *crucified Jesus*; or what he meant by his being *forsaken* of God.

* Matt. xxvii. 40, &c.

III. THE

III. THE reasons of God's thus forsaking his beloved Son.

I. LET us briefly consider the *style* which our dying Lord uses in addressing himself to God, *My God, my God*. This seems to denote his *innocence*, his *choice* of God for *his God*, and his *filial trust* and *confidence* in him.

1. HIS *innocence*. God beareth not sinners; this he well knew, and therefore would not have taken the liberty of this familiar appellation, if he had been such a one.

“^f I have not sat with vain persons, neither
 “ have I gone in with dissemblers. I have
 “ hated the congregation of evil doers; and
 “ have not sat with the wicked, unless it was
 “ to convert them from the evil of their
 “ ways. I have always walked in mine integrity, have loved that which is good, and
 “ fulfilled all righteousness: and why then
 “ hast thou forsaken me? I know of no reason for this in myself. Are not thine eyes
 “ upon the righteous, and thine ears open to
 “ their cry? why then so far from me,
 “ who never knew any sin, nor fail'd in any
 “ one point of my duty?” These words can signify no less than a *consciousness* of his *integrity* at the time of our Saviour's using

^f Psal. xxvi. &c.

them ;

them ; at that very time his heart was so far from reproaching him, as to applaud every action of his life, and fill him with great peace and assurance.

2. CHRIST might well say, *My God, my God*, because he had *chosen* and *vouched* him for such, and lov'd and delighted in him with a flame of devotion which angels themselves cannot equal. " *My soul*
 " *has said, thou art my portion, O Lord!*
 " Thou art more to me than the whole
 " world besides ; more than that heaven
 " where I resided before I had a *body pre-*
 " *pared for me ; for whom had I in heaven*
 " *but thee !* and what then is *there upon*
 " *earth that I can desire besides thee ; upon*
 " *this earth, which I have always despised,*
 " its honours, its riches, and its pleasures ?
 " Thy love, O my father ! has been my
 " all, all my aim, and all my reward ;
 " and *my love* makes me put such a value
 " on *thine* : whence then is this present
 " distance from the Son of thy bosom ?
 " *why* dost thou forsake him, whose heart
 " is joined to thee with such a strength of
 " affection, that I can never depart from
 " thee, never be under the least tempta-
 " tion to do it ?"

3. THESE words, *My God, my God*, imply the *filial confidence* and *trust* which Christ reposed in his Father, at the very
time

time that he complained so tenderly of his having *forsaken him*. “*Though he slay me,*”
 “*yet will I put my trust in him.*” I have no
 “doubt of his love, though like the sun it
 “now hides itself, and suspends its cheer-
 “ing beams. The *relation* is not broken
 “off between us, but subsists as strong and
 “inviolable as ever. I am well assured of
 “it, and therefore will not cease to say, *my*
 “*God*, whatever darkness overspreads me.
 “I have done nothing to forfeit his favour,
 “and I know he is too just, as well as good,
 “to deprive me of it without a cause.”—
 But what then *means* this tender and pas-
 sionate *complaint*, *My God, my God, why*
hast thou forsaken me? which is the next
 thing to be considered.

II. IN what *sense* then was *Christ forsaken*
by God in his *passion*?

I. ARE we to believe that God was *an-*
gry with his well-beloved son? was his
heart turned *against* him, and his *love* to-
 wards him for some time interrupted? did
 the *wrath* of God fall upon *this sacrifice* like
 fire from heaven, and as it were *consume* it,
 as he saith of his own *zeal*? Some persons
 have talked after this *crude*, not to say *shock-*
ing manner. They first suppose an *impossi-*
ble exchange of *persons* between *Christ* and
 those

those he was to redeem, as if their sins were properly imputed to him, the guilt as well as the punishment of them; and by virtue of this imputation he was the greatest of sinners who really knew no sin in his own person: and then having supposed this impossible exchange of persons, they next suppose another impossibility, but which naturally follows, the former being granted, that during the time of our Saviour's sufferings, God carry'd it towards him as if he had been really a sinner, one laden with iniquity, whom he therefore loaded with his wrath. These things I call impossible; for how in the nature of things could they possibly be? how could the same person at the same time be both innocent and guilty, the object of the love of God, and of his wrath? or how could the righteous judge of the world, who is infinite in knowledge, reckon things and persons to be what they really were not? Is it so very difficult to distinguish between the effects and consequences of God's displeasure against sinners, and that displeasure it self? between the punishment of sin, and the guilt of sin? the guilt, which inseparably adheres to the sinner himself who did the guilty action. Might not Christ in such a degree, and for so long a time as was agreed in the counsels of heaven between the Father and Him, suffer the former; while

he had nothing to do with the *latter*, and could have nothing to do with it? and this is the whole meaning of these expressions, in which *Christ* is said to have been ^g *made sin*, that is, a *sin-offering*, (for so the original expression is known frequently to signify) and to have ^h *born our sins in his own body on the tree*, i. e. the *pains* and *death* which were the *punishment* of sin; it being common in scripture to put *sin* for the *punishment* of it. By these, and such like forms of expression, no more is intended, than that our Redeemer did *so far* stand in the *room* of sinners, as by his *own free* consent to be liable to suffer a great many *infirmities*, and *death* itself upon their account: but the *wrath* or *displeasure* of God, properly speaking, he never did, nor could lie under. The *death* of Christ is represented as an act of the *most consummate obedience*: ⁱ *being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* ^k *I come, saith he, to do thy will, when a body was prepared for him, in which he was to offer one sacrifice for sins for ever; because it was not possible the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.* And so very acceptable was this *act* of *obedience* to the Father, that his love to him,

^g 2 Cor. v. 21. ^h 1 Pet. ii. 24. ⁱ Philip. ii. 8.
^k Hebr. x. 4, &c.

deservedly

deservedly great as it was before, was *encreased* by this means; ¹ *therefore does my Father love me, BECAUSE I lay down my life for my sheep.* And how, *consistently* with all this, could the *anger* of God fly out against him, at the very time he was performing an *act of obedience*, by which he recommended himself in the most effectual manner to the *love* and *approbation* of the Father? The voice from heaven, at the *baptism* and *transfiguration* of our Saviour, might have been repeated also at his *crucifixion*; *This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased*; “and never better pleased than
“ now, that he is approving his obedience
“ and resignation to me, and his love to
“ mankind, at the expence of his own valuable life; though I see it needful to
“ withdraw from him for a season.”

2. BUT if God was not *angry* with his Son, might not the Son *apprehend* that he was, or at least *doubt* of the continuance of his Father's *love* to him, the fear of which filled him with this amazing anguish? *not so neither.* I observ'd before, in explaining the sense of these words, *My God, my God*; that they denote a *consciousness* of his own *innocence*, and a *filial confidence* in God, with which the present supposition of his *apprehending* himself to be fallen under the *dis-*

¹ John x. 17.

pleasure of his Father is not to be reconciled : and indeed several other expressions, uttered by him on the *cross*, plainly show the contrary. His *prayer* for his *crucifiers*, ^m *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do*, is an argument that he did not think he had lost his interest in the court of heaven, when he was persuaded that for *his* sake, and at *his request*, the Father would pardon one of the greatest sins that was ever committed. His promise to the penitent thief, ⁿ *to day shalt thou be with me in paradise*, not only proves him to have been secure of his own reward, (for which reason it is elsewhere said, ^o *that for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame*) but likewise confident of his having a power to reward his followers. And the like meaning do the words carry in them in which he breathed forth his holy soul : ^p *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.* “ I commend that which I know thou wilt “ readily receive. My spirit flies to thee, “ as its never-failing refuge after this bitter “ storm, sure to meet with rest and refresh- “ ment in thy bosom.” The *power* of God to *terrify* the innocent soul of his Son, with a *false* apprehension of his own case, as cast off by him when he was not, and even as

^m Luke xxiii. 34. ⁿ Luke xxiii. 43. ^o Heb. xii.
2. ^p Luke xxiii. 46.

deservin

deserving to be cast off for being *deficient* in his duty to him; the *power* of God thus to deceive and afflict his Son, I do not dispute. But however *possible* this was to the *power* of God, it is plain, from the *arguments* before mentioned, that it *was not done*; as from the *truth*, and *holiness*, and *justice* of God, it is plain it *could not* be done without the greatest reproach to the Deity. The scripture saith, ^a *it is impossible for God to lie*; but what had such a *delusion* as this been better? to make his Son believe things for which there was no manner of foundation? And as for his being in such an error if *left to himself*, it is also impossible: his *conscience* could not *accuse* him of what he never *committed*; and he had too worthy and honourable thoughts of the Deity, to *apprehend* his displeasure, while *his own heart did not condemn him*. He knew that ^r *the righteous Lord loveth righteousness*, and could not therefore but love *him*.

BUT what then can we make of our Saviour's ^f *agony in the garden*, in which *his soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death*; inasmuch that *he sweat as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground*; and *falling upon his face, prayed with the greatest earnestness*; *If it be possible, let this cup pass from me*?

^a Heb. vi. 18, ^r Psal. xi. 7. ^f Luke xxii. 41, &c.

Whatever was the *cause* of this *extream distress* of our Lord, (which perhaps we shall never fully understand in this life) it could not proceed from any *fear* he had of the *displeasure* of God kindling against him, as is evident from the reasons before mentioned. It is not altogether unlikely, that the *devil* might have leave to *try the force* of his *hellish terrors*: so much seems to be implied in these words of our Saviour at his apprehension; *Now is your hour, and the power of darknes*. He might be permitted to *work upon the imagination* of our Saviour, and to darken and disturb it; so as that the scene he was to pass through appeared much more gloomy and frightful than it would else have done: his *natural spirits* too might be *exhausted*; and this, by means of the union between soul and body, might be attended with a *dejection of mind*; the consequence of which would be, that though he had no *guilt* to charge himself with, and no *ground* to suspect a *failure of affection* on the part of his Father; yet his soul being *cast down within him* by the terrors which overspread him, and a *view* of the *sins and misery* of mankind, which perhaps now presented themselves to his thoughts; he could not forbear expressing the infirmity

^t Luke xxii. 53. See also John xiv. 30. and Luke iv. 13.

of the human nature in that request, "that if possible the cup might pass from him; not that he might be excus'd from death itself, but from these dreadful concomitants of it. Having said so much to prevent or remove a wrong notion in this matter, as if God was angry with his Son, or the Son apprehended him to be so; I am next to consider briefly the true meaning of this complaint.

* A LEARNED and judicious commentator has observed, "that in the Hebrew way of speaking, God is said to leave or forsake any person, when he suffers him to fall into great calamities, and to lie under great miseries, and does not help him out of them; and therefore Zion being long afflicted, is brought in by the prophet *Isaiab*, chap. lxi. 14. thus complaining, *the Lord has forsaken me, the Lord has forgotten me.* And the Psalmist, as he is frequent in this complaint, so does he manifestly explain himself in the words following the complaint of his being forsaken: *why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?*" So that according to this learned expositor, no more may be intended, than God's seeming to have no regard to his sufferings, by leaving him in the power of his enemies, to say and do what they pleased.

" Matt. xxvi. 39.

* Whitby in loc.

I own this does not seem to give *full* satisfaction, and therefore I would be more particular.

1. *WHY* hast thou forsaken me? i. e.
 “ Why dost thou leave me *destitute* of thy
 “ heavenly aid in this dreadful conflict? *Why*
 “ must I tread the wine-press alone? why
 “ encounter with the malice of my enemy,
 “ and bear all the pains and infirmities of
 “ nature in my own strength? In my agony,
 “ when I prayed so fervently, *that the cup*
 “ *might pass from me, there appeared an*
 “ *angel from heaven strengthening me; but*
 “ now thou neither helpest me *immediately,*
 “ nor by thy *holy angels*: of these *heavenly*
 “ *people*, as well as of mankind, there is
 “ none with me; but I am left to *wrestle*
 “ *single against principalities and powers,*
 “ *against the rulers of the darkness of this*
 “ *world, and against spiritual wickednesses*
 “ *in high places.*” And was he not a match
 for them in his own strength? able *alone* to
 stand against their whole force, and to sup-
 port the load of sufferings which was laid
 upon him, without the assistance of *mi-*
nistring angels? doubtless he was, and for
 that reason was left to himself upon the
 cross. Those friendly spirits, who are ^w *sent*
to minister to them who shall be heirs of sal-
vation, would, we may be sure, have gladly

^w Hebr. i. 14

ministred

ministred to the *captain of salvation* upon this occasion. It is reasonable to suppose they were his *usual* attendants, and would not have deserted him in his *greatest distress*, if it had not been the *will* of God that they should stand by, and be *witnesses* of the conflict, not *auxiliaries* in it.

2. *W H Y* hast thou forsaken me? *i. e.*
 “ Why hast thou taken from me the joys
 “ and *consolations* of thy *presence*. If I had
 “ these, as I have formerly enjoyed them,
 “ no sorrows and pains that I could feel
 “ would make any great impression upon
 “ me. I would never think my self *alone*,
 “ if the Father was with me, as in times
 “ past. But, oh! the scene is changed,
 “ and that darkness which now covers the
 “ earth, is but an emblem of that thicker
 “ night which has involved my soul! One
 “ is occasioned by the *eclipse* of the *sun’s*
 “ glorious body, the other by the *hiding* of
 “ my Father’s *countenance*; the *brightness* of
 “ which having shone upon me, and being
 “ now *withdrawn*, I am like one who pass-
 “ eth on a sudden from the midst of a clear
 “ sun-shine into great darkness: the dark-
 “ ness is more uncomfortable for the light
 “ which preceded it, and the *quick suc-*
 “ *cession* of one to the other, renders the
 “ change still more disagreeable. But what
 “ is the light which this *bodily eye* beholds,
 “ though

“ though sweet, to that *divine* and *imma-*
 “ *terial* light in which my soul has ex-
 “ *patiated* with infinite pleasure? or what
 “ is the privation of the one, to that of
 “ the other?” Amidst all the infirmities
 and sufferings of the present life, our holy
 Jesus enjoyed a kind of heaven upon earth;
 having, as 'tis probable, such a freedom of
 intercourse with the God of heaven, whose
 presence is the glory and happiness of those
 blissful mansions as was peculiar to himself.
 We may apply to him in this sense these
 words, which were indeed spoken in an-
 other: * *No man has ascended up to heaven,*
but he who came down from heaven, even the
Son of man, who is in heaven. While he so-
 journed here below, he had his *conversation*
 so as no man else ever had, *in heaven*; and,
 as speaking of the *angels*, who by their
 office are guardians of his children, he saith,
 that *in heaven they always behold the face*
of his Father who is in heaven, i. e. in what-
 ever part of the creation these happy spirits
 are, they are *conscious* to the presence of
 God, in which they stand ready to re-
 ceive and execute his orders; so Christ
 walked in the light of God's countenance,
 which made his condition the more sensibly
 sad when this light was withdrawn.

* John iii. 15. y Matt. xviii. 10.

3. *WHY* hast thou forsaken me? *i. e.*
 “ Why am I left so long in this suffering
 “ condition, exposed to the *insults* of wicked
 “ men, and the *rage* of *infernal spirits*, a
 “ spectacle of shame and horror to the
 “ world? why dost thou delay so long to
 “ take my soul? O come, my Father, and
 “ at length release my wearied spirit!” This
 is the more likely to be the meaning of this
 complaint, because it was not till the *ninth*
hour, *i. e.* towards the close of his passion;
 that he complained thus pathetically: and
 soon after, as if in answer to his cry, death
 is sent to discharge him from this bloody
 warfare; upon which *he yielded up the ghost*,
saying at the same time, with a loud voice,
Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.
 Among the events which happened at our
 Saviour’s crucifixion, and convinced the
² *Roman centurion that he was truly the Son*
of God, this was one, that he died the very
 moment he spake these words, according
 to the observation of *St. Mark*; *And when*
the centurion that stood over-against him saw
that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost,
i. e. immediately, or in that very instant,
he said, truly this man was the son of God:
 his dying in such a manner shew’d, that as
he commended his soul into the hands of his
Father, so into his hands the Father received

² Mark xv. 39.

it.

it. The very words prove that Christ apprehended he was just departing; but how could he think so, if he had not *known* that the Father *heard* him? or what could the spectators, who were not blinded by prejudice, conclude otherwise than that his death was *hastned* by a *miracle*, since *nature* was not yet spent? and therefore 'twas that *his legs were not broken*, as those of the two malefactors who suffered with him, he dying sooner than they; which made *Pilate marvel* that he was already dead. And thus, as well as by receiving the assistance of an angel in his agony, *he was heard in that he feared*.

I WOULD make one reflection on this part of my subject, before I pass to the next. How is the *condition* of our Redeemer *changed* since the time he made this bitter complaint! The scene he was then passing through was so full of terror, that he cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* now he is *exalted at the right hand of God*. As the sun, after its eclipse, broke out with double lustre upon the world, so did the *light* of his Father's countenance upon his soul; *shame*, and *sorrow*, and *suffering*, were succeeded by *glory*, *rest*, and *felicity*, and *victory* with *triumph*. We are now to conceive of him that died, as liable

^a Hebr. v. 7.

to die no more ; but on the contrary, invested with *power* to bestow *life* and *immortality* upon all his followers. We are now to think of the *crucified, forsaken Jesus*, as incircled with the acclamations of angels, who minister under him, *to them who are heirs of salvation* ; and as received into the bosom of eternal love, where he employs all his interest, which is not small, to engage the favour of his Father to our sinful race : those of them, especially, who have given themselves to him in an everlasting covenant, and made it their sincere and constant endeavour to keep all his *commandments*.

III. WE are next, with *humility*, to inquire into the *reasons* of God's thus *forsaking his beloved Son*. As the scripture does not give us any *particular* reasons of this, *distinct* from those of his *sufferings* in *general*, we have no other rule to go by but the *end* or *design* of his sufferings, which relates either to his *example*, or his *sacrifice*, or his *priesthood*, or his *victory* over the enemies of his church. Now these being some of the principal ends of his sufferings, considered in the whole, we may be allowed to think that this particular part of his sufferings, his being *forsaken on the cross*, was intended by the wisdom of God for the

the *perfection* of his *example*, the *perfection* of his *atonement*, the *perfection* of his *priesthood*, and finally, the *perfection* of his *victory*.

I. IF the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was pleased to *forsake* his well-beloved Son in his *dying passion*, it was in order to add the *greater perfection* to his *example*. It is expressly said by an inspired writer, that ^b *Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps*: and by another, that ^c *in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*. But what need had he to *learn obedience*, who was always *disposed* to do the will of God with the utmost readiness? or how could he be *more perfect*, who was *perfect* before? his *disposition to obey* was *perfect* even before any trial was made of it, but not his *actual obedience*: by his sufferings he did not *learn to obey*, but he *learned* what that obedience was, how difficult and severe, which God required of him in order to his being a *perfect* model of obedience, and submission to his

^b 1 Pet. ii. 2. ^c Hebr. v. 7—9.

suffering members. In the *virtues* of his *life*, when he went up and down doing good, and suffering evil, he was an *example* fit to be proposed to the imitation of all his followers; he was at once an *example* of the *active*, and the *passive* virtues: but as it is the most difficult part to *suffer* in a *right* manner, to bear every thing most painful and disagreeable to human nature, and neither quit our patience, nor innocence; so of this most difficult part of that *righteousness* which he *fulfilled* in the whole extent of it, he gave us the most *perfect* pattern in the last scene of his life, which was nothing but suffering. And to carry his *example* to the greatest height, he not only suffered from men, but from God; *pain*, and *shame*, and *death*, from men; *desertion* from God: in all teaching us how to behave with humble filial resignation to the *one*, and charity and meekness to the *other*.

2. ANOTHER design of the Father in this temporary *desertion* of his *dying Son*, might be, to increase the *perfection* of his *atonement*: for this we know, that ^dhe bore our *sins* in his own body on the tree, and put away *sin* by the sacrifice of himself; and that by one offering he hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified; so that now we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness

^d 1 Pet. ii. 24. Heb. ix. 26. x. 14. Eph. i. 7.

ness of sins. According to the established method of reconciliation, *without shedding of blood there is no remission*: in conformity to this establishment, the Son of God shed his most precious blood in the nature and quality of a *sacrifice* for all mankind. *The blood of bulls and of goats could not take away sin*, so as to *purify the conscience* from it: here, therefore, we see a nobler victim, who *presents himself* before the altar, and *offers himself* upon it, while the legal sacrifices were *presented and offered by others*. Nay, he not only sheds his blood, in which the life of the body consists, but he sheds it with all the circumstances necessary to complete the expiation: his soul had its share of suffering; and though being pure and innocent, he could know nothing of the gnawings of a guilty conscience, that *worm which never dies*, nor suffer under the *wrath and displeasure* of an holy God, who loving righteousness, could not for a moment hate that *person* who of all Beings represented him most exactly in this respect; yet he bore all that an *innocent* Being could well be liable to, and for so long a time as the divine *wisdom* judged mete. He was made a *spectacle* to God, to *angels*, and to *men*: men and devils confederated against him, and God his Father stood aloof from his sorrow;

° Heb. ix. 22.

not only kept silence, but hid his face from him, insomuch that his enemies esteemed him ^f *stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*; and that what they did to him was approved by the righteous governor of the world. Certainly, since the expiation of sin was to be made by *obedience* and *suffering*, and he on whom ^g *the Lord laid the iniquities of us all*, not only yielded an *obedience* becoming himself as the Son of God, and the Father to whom it was paid, but likewise suffered all that an *innocent* person could well do; we may be allowed to say, there was nothing wanting to make the sufferings of Christ a *full and compleat* atonement for sin: not indeed a proper *equivalent*, which *justice* could not refuse; but such a *satisfaction* as the wise ruler was perfectly pleased with, because admirably adapted to express both his *righteousness* and *goodness*, his *hatred* of sin, and *love* and *compassion* to sinners; and so to encourage the truly penitent, and to deter all presumptuous transgressors.

3. THIS circumstance of our Saviour's sufferings, his being *forsaken* of God, contributes to the *perfection* of his *priesthood*. It was expedient, that as our *high-priest*, he should have an affectionate regard to the interests, and a tender compassionate sense of the infirmities of those for whom he was to

^f Isai. liii. 4.

^g Isai. liii. 6.

appear, and interceed in the presence of God in heaven, after having *made his soul an offering for sin* here below. Of the *high-priest* under the law, who was taken from among men, and ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he might offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; the writer to the *Hebrews* observes, ^h that he could have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way; for that he himself also was compassed with infirmity. 'Tis true, the apostle and high-priest of our profession was not compassed with infirmities, i. e. with *sinful infirmities*, as the legal high-priest was, who by reason thereof was obliged, as for the people, so likewise for himself, to offer for sins: this was not our Saviour's case, who had no sin of his own to expiate, and indeed would not have been qualified to be our Saviour if he had: ⁱ For such an high-priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; who needeth not daily, as those high-priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's; and therefore 'tis said, ^k he is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. But then though free from our *sinful*, he was subject to our *sinless* infirmities. And

^h Hebr. v. 1, 2. ⁱ Hebr. vii. 26, 27. ^k Heb. vii. 25.

this is our comfort, ¹ *that we have not an high-priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin* ; made like to us so far, as to be in appearance left of God, the greatest evil which could befall him. And why did it ^m *become him in all things* (in this as well as others) *to be made like unto his brethren* ? but that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people : for in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. He suffered by inward sorrow and desertion, as by outward and bodily pain ; and is therefore able to succour them that are in the same condition, so as to be also willing and inclined to do it.

4. THIS compleats his victory over the grand adversary of God and man, and renders his triumph the more glorious. Satan shall see that he has another kind of person to deal with than he had in the first Adam, one who left to himself, is not only able to cope with him, but easily to baffle all his temptations and stratagems, and with an invincible courage to repel all his assaults. God knew him so well as to make choice of him for his champion, and the captain of our salvation ; that this second and greater man

¹ Heb. iv. 15.

^m Heb. ii. 17.

might, by his successful conflict with the tempter, regain paradise, and restore the cause of the human kind, which was betrayed and lost by the weakness of the *first*. The devil had trial of his *piety* and *fortitude* in the *wilderness*, where he tempted him for *forty* days; and it was not till *the temptation was ended, and the devil departed from him*, that the *angels came and ministered* to him. The combat was managed without any *second*; and now behold him called to another kind of trial! behold him in the hands of murderers, and as it were abandoned to the fury of their father the devil! whose cause was *most favoured* by God and good angels, shall not be known by the help they afford him: on the contrary, by crying out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* he shows, that whatever interest he imagined himself to have in the king of heaven, he now thought him in some sense withdrawn. But is this God's peculiar regard to his well-beloved Son? is it thus he proves his love to him? Yes, in this very thing he consults his honour; this is the contrivance of his wisdom, to make the *defeat* of satan on the one hand, and the *conquest* of his Son on the other, more *compleat* and *illustrious*. It shall be *properly his conquest*; therefore at his apprehension, he waves making use of that *power* which

which he tells *Peter* he had over angels ;
ⁿ *Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels ? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be ?* In like manner, when nailed to the cross, and challenged by the *Jews* to come down from thence, if he were the Son of God ; it was not for want of power that he did not, or for want of love and compassion in God, or willingness in the angels to assist him, that he was left without succour : no, but because it was expedient that things should be thus ordered, among other reasons, for the greater glory of our blessed Lord, in his conquest over all the powers of earth and hell.

I would close this inquiry with two reflections.

I. How should this *indear* the Redeemer of the world to us, who was willing to suffer such things for our sakes ; *shame*, and *pain*, and *death* ; to be *persecuted* by men, *assaulted* by Satan, and *forsaken* of God ! When we read and meditate upon these things, how can we chuse but reflect on the love of *Jesus* ; and by the consideration of that love, have the liveliest sentiments of love and gratitude excited in our breasts ! We must want *faith*, or a principle of in-

ⁿ Matth. xxvi. 53, 54.

genuity, if in this light our Saviour does not appear most amiable to us ; ° *for to them who believe, he is precious.* And let us not mistake in the *nature* of that acknowledgement which we owe our Redeemer for his love ; it is not merely to *follow* him with our *praises*, but to *devote* ourselves to his service, to *live to him*, and *live like him* ; to *espouse* his cause, *succour* his members, *pursue* the *interests* of his kingdom, *esteem* his *virtues*, and endeavour to *exemplify* them. And as *meditations* on the love of Christ, so *resolutions* thus to act suitably to them, are a proper employment of the mind at the Lord's table.

2. THIS part of the history of our Saviour's last passion, carries in it a great deal of *instruction* and *consolation* to his faithful disciples, when they are in like circumstances with him. There is a *twofold desertion* to which good men are liable in the present state, *external*, and *internal* ; *external* when they are involved in great troubles and afflictions, or left in the hands of their enemies to *do to them whatsoever they list*, as ^p *Christ* tells his disciples the *Jews* had done with regard to *John the Baptist*. God in his providence, does, as it were, say to those who persecute his church and people, behold, *all* that they have is in

° 1 Pet. ii. 7.

^p Matth. xvii. 12.

your

your power, sometimes without so much as adding that limitation, but *save their lives*. When this is the case, they have the best of examples to direct and encourage them : God may seem to forsake them, as he did his own Son, but it is for very wise ends ; and if they behave under sufferings like their great Master, their sufferings shall at last be rewarded like his. ^a *Verily, there is a reward for the righteous ;* and a most distinguished one for those of them *who are persecuted for righteousness sake*. By *internal desertion* may either be understood God's ^r *taking in part from them his holy spirit*, to testify his displeasure for some great offence, of which they have been guilty ; or a *state of darkness and dejection*, into which they are permitted to fall for the trial of their faith, and other graces : the *first* of these does not come under our present consideration, the *latter* does ; and though it be *less properly* called by the name of *spiritual desertion*, yet is most generally meant by that expression, and very often confounded with the former. Some who have no other reason to condemn themselves, yet do it upon this account, that they have not those *refreshments of spirit* which they have sometimes had ; from whence they conclude, but very falsely, that God has in anger *forsaken* them,

^a Psal. lviii. 11. Matth. v. 12. ^r Psal. li. 11.

and are ready to question whether all was not *delusion* which they have formerly experienced ; or, however that be, whether God will be *favourable* to them any more, This is reasoning very wrong, and so as they would not be liable to do, if they considered as they ought, this instance of our blessed Lord, who was *forsaken* of God, as to the *sensible* and *cheering* manifestations of his presence, at the time he was performing the most pleasing act of *obedience* to him. The *real cause* of this *sadness* and *dejection* of mind is many times (I believe I might have said almost always) nothing else than a *disorder* in the *bodily* frame, or some *afflictive* or *cross* events of life, which set the melancholly thoughts on work ; not any immediate infliction from the hand of God, or proper hiding of his face ; and is therefore to be called *desertion* or *forsaking*, upon no other account but that God *leaves causes* to produce their *natural effects*, not interposing to alter the course of things, or vouchsafing any extraordinary supports, which might bear up the mind, and even raise it above the influence of the body and of the world. As this may very reasonable be supposed the case, there is no ground for those unfavourable thoughts of themselves, which good men are too apt to run into under such a state of mind. The *end* of such *desertion*

sertion (if it can be so called) is not for *punishment*, but for *trial*. I confess, it is no way improper, when christians find their souls thus benighted and depress'd, to reflect whether they have not given occasion to it by faults in their conduct ; nay, 'tis highly proper to make such reflections, and may be of singular service to confirm them in the persuasion of their own integrity, when they make search after their iniquities, and find none which can be supposed to have provoked God to chasten them in his severe displeasure ; and finding no such sins as these, and especially if they have been more exact and circumspect than ordinary in their walking, they may then be sure it is not so properly for *punishment*, as for *trial*, that their heavenly father lets them suffer such a dearth of *inward consolation* ; that they may be more conformed to the image of his Son ; that their *love* to God, and *trust* in him, may have an opportunity to discover their strength, and to grow yet stronger ; that these and other graces may be exercised and improved, they may become more useful, both in the *world* and in the *church*, by their *example*, and at length receive the brighter crown. - - - Wherefore let all those^s *who fear the Lord, and obey his voice, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their*

^s Isa. l. 10.

God,

God, though at present they walk in darkness, and see no light : let them look unto Jesus ; like him call God their God in the thick darkness ; which they may be allowed to do if their own hearts do not reproach them ; and look forward to that time, when their trials of this and every other kind shall have an end, and they partake of the glory of their Redeemer, after having tasted of the cup of his sufferings here below.

^t Heb. xii. 2.





A N
I N Q U I R Y

Into the true SENSE of

I CORINTH. xv. *ver.* 19.



Y R I U O I

into the hands of

1 CORINTH. XV. 50. 10.



A N

I N Q U I R Y

Into the true SENSE of

I CORINTH. XV. 19.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

THE resurrection of the body is a prime article of the christian faith, and an article of very great importance; and yet there were even in the apostles days some at Corinth who said, ^a that there was no resurrection of the body; representing it, 'tis likely, as an absurd and incredible thing, repugnant to sense and reason, and neither possible nor desirable. To prevent the spreading of so dangerous an error, the apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians, puts them in mind of a train of bad consequences, which would follow upon the denial of this doctrine; accounting, that if they had any love for their religion, these consequences were such, that

^a I Cor. xv. 12.

they

they must needs abhor them; and out of abhorrence to these would reject the *principle* from which they naturally flowed. The *first* ill consequence of the *denial* of the *resurrection* is mentioned in the 13th verse. *If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is not Christ risen:* “ For, Christ dying as our
 “ ^b *sacrifice*, if he be risen at all, he is risen
 “ as our *head*, and designed that his *own*
 “ resurrection should be a *pledge*, and an
 “ *example* of ours. *He died for our sins*,
 “ ver. 3. *i. e.* to remove all the penal effects
 “ of sin, of which we know that *death* is
 “ one: and how can this effect of sin be
 “ removed but by a *resurrection*? To pro-
 “ cure a *resurrection*, therefore, was *one* end
 “ of Christ’s dying, and that his death was
 “ accepted of God, and will prove effectual to
 “ this end we are sure, if he *himself* be *risen*:
 “ and consequently, to *deny* the *resurrection*
 “ of the *dead*, is in effect the same as to say,
 “ that *Christ is not risen.*” ^c *And if Christ*
is not risen, then is our preaching vain, and
your faith also vain. “ The *resurrection* of
 “ Christ is the foundation of his religion;
 “ for having assured his disciples that he
 “ would rise again, if he did not, he was
 “ a *false prophet*, and so could not be the
 “ *author* of a true religion; *our preaching*,
 “ therefore, in the *name* of such a person

^b Heb. ix. 26. ^c 1 Cor. xv. 14.

“ is no better than telling you an idle story,
 “ and the credit you have given to our doc-
 “ trine is altogether groundless : this is
 “ the unavoidable consequence of denying the
 “ resurrection of Christ, as that is the plain
 “ consequence of denying that the dead will
 “ be raised.” ^a Yea, and we are found false
 witnesses of God, because we have testified of
 God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised
 not up, if so be the dead rise not. This is an-
 other thing which they would not be able
 to avoid granting upon the same principle,
 viz. that the apostles (whom they had no
 reason to think capable of so great a wick-
 edness) had born witness to a known falsity,
 and this in the most solemn manner, saying,
 that God had raised Christ from the dead,
 and appealed to him for the truth of their
 testimony, when they very well knew he
 had done no such thing. How high an
 opinion soever they had entertained of the
 apostles for their virtue and integrity, they
 must acknowledge this accusation against
 them to be just, if they assured the world,
 as from their own knowledge, that Christ was
 risen, when he was not ; it being certain
 that God had not raised him up, if so be the
 dead were not to rise. Consider farther,
 that as your faith in Christ is vain, so ^e ye
 are yet in your sins ; i. e. “ for any benefit

^a Ver. 15. ^e Ver. 17.

“ you

“ you can receive by Christ you are so: he
 “ died indeed *for* sin, or with a design to
 “ deliver us from it; but if he *rose not*
 “ *again*, ’tis an undeniable argument that
 “ he *died in vain*. Your *hope* therefore, if
 “ you have any, of obtaining the *forgive-*
 “ *ness* of your sins, must arise from some-
 “ thing *else*, and not from what *Christ* has
 “ done, or suffered for you; all this being
 “ to no purpose on the supposal of his still
 “ continuing under the power of the grave.”
 “ Then they also that are fallen asleep in Christ
 “ are perished. “ As many as made a pro-
 “ fession of *christianity*, and died in the belief
 “ of it, are cut off from all their pleasing
 “ expectations of being with their Saviour
 “ after death in *mansions* of glory, which
 “ he made them believe [§] he *went be-*
 “ *fore to prepare for them*. These their
 “ *hopes* are perished, and they *themselves*
 “ with them, if they had nothing else to
 “ trust to.” After which he adds, *If in*
this life only we have hope in Christ, we are
of all men most miserable. “ If the dead are
 “ not to rise, and Christ be not risen, we
 “ have nothing to hope from him beyond
 “ this life, he cannot do us the least kind-
 “ ness hereafter; and this being the case, it
 “ must be own’d that *we are of all men most*
 “ *miserable.* - - - In inquiring into the true
 sense of these words;

^f Ver. 18.

[§] John xiv. 2, 3.

I. I WILL endeavour to show, that *several notions have no manner of foundation in these words*, which have been thought, or may be thought to be included in their meaning.

II. I SHALL consider the *case here supposed*, with the *assertion grounded upon it*. The *case supposed* is, that the persons of whom St. Paul is speaking, *had no hope beyond this life*; the *assertion grounded upon the case supposed* is, that they were then of *all men most miserable*.

III. I shall point out the *argument which is secretly couch'd in this passage for the truth of the gospel*, and show where the *strength of it lies*; viz. that since the *persons intended in this place would have been thus miserable, if in this life only they had hope in Christ*; it is therefore certain, that their *hope in Christ was not confined to this life*.

I. I SHALL endeavour to show, that *several notions which have been thought, or may be thought, to be included in the meaning of these words, have no manner of foundation in them*.

I. THE apostle's reasoning does not imply, that there is *no evidence of a future*
 VOL. IV. D d state,

state, but what is drawn from the *gospel revelation*; so that if *this* fails, men have *nothing to believe, or fear, or hope*, beyond the grave. The apostle *Paul* could not be of this mind, since he had been a *Jew* before he was a *Christian*, and knew that, excepting the *sect* of the *Sadducees*, all the *Jews* believed not only a *future state* in general, but a state of *happiness* for good men, and *punishment* for the *wicked*; and that there would be a *resurrection* of *both*: and the *Jewish religion* being from God, whatever expectations it encouraged of things unseen and future, they must be well grounded; the *Jews* therefore must be allowed to have had the knowledge of a *future state* independent of the *christian revelation*, and ^h many ages before it. Nor can it be said, that though the *Jews* had some knowledge of this matter, yet the *heathen* had no way of discovering any thing about it. The apostle makes no mention of *Jew* or *Gentile* in this place, and therefore excludes *both* or *neither* from the *hope* of an *after-life*. It must be confess'd, that the *resurrection of the body*, with which the *Jews* were well acquainted, was a perfect secret to the *heathen world*: but the knowledge of a *state of recompences* after this life

^h See Heb. xi. throughout; and 2 Macc. vii. 9, &c.

is ended, does not depend upon the knowledge of the *resurrection of the body*; unless it appears that there is no *higher principle* in man than *the body*, and distinct from it; or that however distinct they are, there is yet such a connection and dependence between them, that when the *body* dies, the *soul* dies together with it, or ceases to think and act, which is a sort of *death* to the soul: then indeed the *heathen* would be hard put to it to prove a future state from the *light of nature*. But does not *reason* prove that the *soul*, though it *dwells* in the *body*, is yet no *part* of it, and may therefore *live out* of the *body*? and accordingly, has it not been the *belief* of *all nations*, that *departed souls* exist in *other mansions*; and either enjoy *bliss*, or suffer *pain* for their actions and behaviour while they were clothed with flesh and blood? is there not in the *soul* of man a *natural* and *invincible desire* of *surviving* the *body*? does not the thought of *annihilation*, or returning to a state of *insensibility*, strike it with horror; unless where it apprehends its condition to be such, that it had better not be at all than exist in such a condition? and even where this is the case, the *soul* dreads *annihilation*, though it does not dread it so much as a *state of misery*. Do not these *desires* of a *future existence* enlarge in proportion as the

soul increases in *knowledge* and *virtue*? and what then are these *desires* but secret hints and whispers to the soul of its *immortality*? Do not the *dispensations* of *providence* in this world, where very often the worst of men pass their lives in ease, and wealth, and pleasure, and the best men suffer adversity; oblige us to have recourse to another world, where all shall be set right, which at present is in a *seeming* confusion? If there be a *providence*, there must be a *law* by which God governs mankind; and if there be a *law*, there must be *rewards* and *punishments*: these *rewards* and *punishments* are not distributed in *this* life; there must consequently be an *hereafter*, when they shall be *justly* distributed. A very wicked man, who had always lived in prosperity, without having his health or fortune at any time impair'd; dying at last when he was 93 years of age; the emperor *Frederic III.* made this wise remark upon it, *See here a proof of another life!* for if there be a righteous God who governs the world, as *reason* and *revelation* teach us, it must needs be, that souls, at their departure out of the body, pass into other places, in order to receive their proper recompences, seeing they do not receive them in this world. In this *reason* and *revelation* do both join their testimony, that the world is not without

out a governor, or a judge ; that those who do not *act* alike, shall not *fare* alike ; that good and bad shall not be *alike annihilated*, or *rewarded*, or *punished alike*, but that there shall be a *difference* made between them, answerable to the *difference* in their dispositions and characters. The concurrence of these two, I mean of *reason* and *revelation*, in this important point, makes the evidence entire ; to the end that no *wicked* man may be without *fear*, and no *good* man without *hope*.

'Tis true, our apostle saith expressly in another place, ⁱ *That life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel* ; but that this is not to be taken *absolutely*, as if the world was *altogether* in the *dark* in this momentous article, 'till the *light of the gospel* shone upon it, is plain from the little that has been now offered : we must therefore understand these words in a *comparative* sense, *viz.* that all which had been discovered about another life, *before* the preaching of the *gospel*, was so inconsiderable, compared with the *revelation* which the *gospel* has made of it to *us*, that *life and immortality* may very well be said not to have been *brought to light till then*. *Before*, there was a *less* degree of *certainty*, as to the *existence* of future recompences, and a

ⁱ 2 Tim. i. 10.

great deal of *uncertainty*, as to their *nature*, and *degree*, and *duration*; whereas, *now*, all these articles are attended with a meridian evidence and lustre. In this sense it is that the sacred writers so often represent the state of the *heathen* world as a state of *darkness*; and make the difference between that and the *gospel* state, to be the same as between the *night* and the *day*. Now few, or none, will from hence argue, that the *heathen* knew *nothing* of God and *divine* things; had no beams of heavenly truth amongst them; when the apostle makes this the ground of their condemnation, that ^k *they held the truth in unrighteousness*. This *light* shined in *darkness*, and would have shone brighter if they had not suppress'd it. Since then these *metaphors* of *day* and *night*, of *light* and *darkness*, which are employed to represent the great *difference* in the condition of mankind *before* their conversion to the *gospel*, and *afterwards*, do not signify the want of *all* divine knowledge in persons destitute of the *light* of *revelation*: why, when the *same metaphors* are particularly applied to the *doctrine* of a *future state*, should they be imagined to carry this sense with them, that where there is *no revelation*, men have *no knowledge at all* of any such state? might it not be as well inferr'd

^k Rom. i. 18.

from the same *metaphors* being used to describe the state of the *heathen*, with regard to matters of *religion* in general, that they knew *nothing* of a *God*, and of a *providence*, or of any *obedience* or *worship* which were due from them to this *supream Being*? I conclude therefore, that the apostle's reasoning does not, and cannot imply, that there is *no* evidence of a *future state*, but what is drawn from the *gospel revelation*; so that this being taken away, men have nothing to *believe*, or *fear*, or *hope* beyond the grave.

2. IN the reasoning of the apostle, it is *not* implied that the *present life*, in itself considered, is a *wretched*, *miserable* state; or, that taking men in general, their portion of *misery* and *affliction*, is, *upon the whole*, greater than of *comfort* and *happiness*; so that *all* men are *miserable*, tho' the *persons* of whom the apostle speaks, would, upon the supposition of *no future reward*, have been *more* miserable than the rest. The scripture, I am sure, gives us another view of things more for the honour of *God*, and for the encouragement and support of mankind; there we are told, that ¹ *the Lord is good to all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works*: ^m *that he hath not left himself without witness, sending us rain*

¹ Psal. cxlv. 9.

^m Acts xiv. 17.

from heaven, and fruitful seasons, and filling our hearts with food and gladness: nay, that ⁿ *he gives us all things richly to enjoy.* Of all which expressions, and a great many more to the same purpose, there would be no making any consistent sense, if the ordinary condition of mankind were so *deplorable*, that *death* was to be *chosen* by all who knew their own interest, rather than *life*. Upon this supposition where would be the *goodness* of God, his *tender mercies*, the ^o *abundance* of *good things* which he is said to have provided for this part of his family? And the testimony of *scripture*, in this matter, is verified by *experience* and *observation*. Is there not a greater plenty of *good things* than of *evil*? have we not more *days*, I might have said as to many persons, more *weeks* and *months* of *health* and *ease*, than *hours* of *pain* and *sickness*? are not our comforts and advantages *many*, our afflictions and troubles *few*? We may indeed by our ignorance, our mistakes, or passions, or evil conduct, *create* troubles to *ourselves*, and *encrease* our load so as not to be well able to stand under it; but such troubles as these we must not place to the account of *nature* or *providence*, but of our *own* faults. The question is, what *notion* we are to entertain of life as it is the *gift* of God; not spoiled by our wrong

ⁿ 1 Tim. vi. 17.^o Job xxxvi. 31.

management, but *rightly* improved and enjoyed? Is it *then* such a wretched, or such a worthless thing, that we should return it in contempt and displeasure upon the hands of the giver? surely no. I own that men are never so happy, but they have room enough to wish themselves still happier; and because they are not so happy as God *could* make them, they may, in a fit of discontent, be ready to throw away the blessings they enjoy, or lose all the sweetness and relish of them: shall we from hence conclude that God is *not good*, or that *life* is not worth *accepting*? or rather, because more truly, shall we not say, that *such* persons are very *unthankful*; or, at best, at such times more swayed by their *passions*, than by their *reason*? Our foolish imaginations, or extravagant desires, do not alter the *real* value of things: happiness, though in a lower degree, is *happiness* still, and as such is to be gratefully acknowledged; and where it is so, will be still encreasing. I farther own, that when a *good man* thinks of that *state of perfection* and *blessedness* which is to come, he may and ought to be willing to go hence, as soon as God shall be pleased to order his removal; but then this is not so properly a *contempt* of *this* life, as a *preference* of the *next*. I am farther of the mind, that life would not be worth very much, especially

to *some* persons, *without* any hope of a better state : but why is that ? being *naturally* afraid of *death*, this *fear* would hinder us from quietly enjoying our portion under the sun. Our case would be somewhat like that of a *covetous* man, who takes but little comfort in all his *wealth*, thro' the anxious concern he is under about losing it : and yet such a man disturbs himself only about a thing that *may* be ; whereas we *certainly* know, that *life* sooner or later will be taken from us ; and not being able to divest ourselves of our *natural dread* of the *privation* of our *beings*, (and it would be much worse if we supposed that we feared a *state of misery*, though we had no hope of any *happiness* after *death*) we should not spend our lives very comfortably. In order therefore to judge what *life* is in *itself* considered, we must set aside the *fear of death*, as well as the *hope* of a *future* life, or only reckon *so much* of this *hope* as is necessary to *overcome* this *fear* : and then I say *life*, generally speaking, would be no *contemptible* gift. If it be said, that mens being tormented by the *fear of death*, is only an *imaginary* case ; I answer, and so is their being *necessarily*, and through no fault of their own, without *all* *hope* of acceptance in a *future* life ; and therefore, if we suppose one of these, we may as well suppose the *other*. Farther, I
readily

readily grant, that cases and circumstances may be supposed, in which nothing but *submission* to the *will* of God can reconcile a person to his continuance in life; such as *want* of things *needful* for us; the *loss* of the most valuable *senses* or *members* of the *body*; the frequent *returns* of *violent pains*; the *influence* of an *unhappy constitution*; the *infirmities* and *burdens* of *age*, which render us incapable of enjoying life, or of delightfully acting any part in it: but these cases not being *common*, are only to be considered as *exceptions* to the *general rule*, that *life is to be esteemed and owned a blessing*; not *objections* against the *truth* of it. Perhaps there is no man, who upon casting up the entire account, will not find that the *sum total* of his *enjoyments*, throughout his life, has been *greater* than of his *sufferings*; and much more does this hold as to the *generality* of mankind. Let us therefore own, to the praise of our Maker, that *life is a valuable gift in itself*, considered; though infinitely more valuable, considered as an *opportunity* of securing, by our good behaviour for a few years, a title to an *immortality* of blessedness and glory.

3. THE apostle's reasoning is not to this sense, that upon *supposition* of *no life to come*, the *virtuous part* of mankind are in a *worse* condition than the *vicious*: for, should we suppose

suppose, for argument's sake, that the *belief* of any *future state* is an *error*, yet this *error* will have a *considerable* influence upon the *happiness* of the *present* life. The belief of a *future state*, whether it be well-grounded or no, will be attended with *hope* and *fear*; with *hope* in them who follow that which is *good*, and with *fear* in those who do *wickedly*. Now these *hopes* and *fears*, let the *objects* of them be never so *imaginary*, must be taken into the account, as contributing very much to the tranquility and pleasure of the mind, or to its disquietude and torment. Let us put the case of a *virtuous* and *good man*, full of bright and glorious *hopes*, who having made it his *business* to serve, and please, and honour God according to his capacity and condition, has a humble confidence towards him, places his entire trust in his *good providence*, and is persuaded, that after this life he shall receive other marks of the divine favour, of a much nobler and more distinguishing kind. On the other hand, let us represent to ourselves a *man* who leads a *wicked life*, dishonours his maker, breaks his laws, and has all the reason in the world to think that God is displeased with him, and will not always let him go unpunished: let us reflect a little on the state of mind in which such a person lives; never truly easy; and, when he allows himself to think soberly,

ly, pierced to the very soul as with a dart, by the stinging reflections of his own conscience, and shuddering with foreboding fears of greater evils, and more enduring pains; nay, whether he will think or no, he cannot stifle all such *fears*: he dreads the thoughts of God; has not the heart to trust his *providence*; and dares not coolly think of a *reckoning to come*. Let all this (the peace and hopes of the *good man*, and the disquietude and terror of the *wicked*) proceed upon a *mistake*; yet as long as these *different effects* of man's believing a life after this continue, (and certainly they will as long as their *belief itself* does, as *that belief* too, probably, will as long as *life*) the *good man* will be *happier* in his *hopes* than the *wicked man* in his *enjoyments*; and the *wicked man* be far from being made so *happy* by the *pleasures of vice*, as he is made *miserable* by the *guilt* of it. We will grant that the *wicked man* hath some pleasures which *conscience* and *religion* will not allow the *good man* to take; but then these pleasures are overpaid for by the lashes of a conscious mind, and the anticipations of *wrath to come*. On the contrary, the *good man* hath the *pains* of watchfulness and restraint, and self-denial, to all which the *wicked man* is a stranger; but then the *pleasure* of every act of self-denial for *religion* and *virtue's* sake, does

more than recompence the *pain*; and this present pleasure is *encreased* by a persuasion of its being only an *earnest* of far greater pleasures in another world. Thus stands the account between the *virtuous* and the *vicious* upon *this* state of the question; and let any impartial person now judge which of them are most *happy* or *miserable*. Certainly not the *vicious*, but the *virtuous* part of mankind are most happy, allowing that they believe a *future state*, though they should prove *mistaken* in believing it. Nay,

4. THE apostle's reasoning does not imply so much as *this*, that *setting aside the belief* of a *future state*, as well as the thing it *self*, and supposing, that as the *good man* has no reason to hope for a state of happiness after this life, so he has not any the *least hope* and *expectation* of it; the man who framed his life by the *rules* of *virtue*, would in this case be of *all men* most *miserable*. No, it is easy to instance in great numbers who would be much *more* miserable than *he*. Every man would be so, that plunged himself into a life of *vice* and *sensuality*; though there were no *difference* between *virtue* and *vice* as to a *future state*; no *hopes* of *future* rewards attending the *one*, nor *fears* of *future punishment* the *other*; yet still there would be a sufficient *distinction* between these two, to make it every man's wisdom to practise

practise the *one*, and avoid the *other*. There would still be the *same* difference between *virtue* and *vice*, as between *order* and *confusion*; as between acting *agreeably* to our faculties, and the several relations and circumstances of life we are in, and acting quite *contrary* to them. The *passions* of the *virtuous man* being kept under better government, cannot be the occasions of those *disturbances* which are in the breast of a man *abandoned* to his *lusts* and *vices*; his *temperance* and *moderation* will be a guard to the *health* of his body, and to the *freedom* and *serenity* of his mind: he will have more enjoyment of himself, and be more capable of enjoying the good things of the world, as a *rational creature* ought to enjoy them; more capable of the pleasures of knowledge, of discharging the business of any calling and profession, and of tasting the delights of friendship and conversation: his *justice* and *benevolence*, and care to perform all other *relative duties*, will be a means of procuring him the esteem and good-will of all, and of his reaping all the advantages of every relation: his *knowledge* of God, and *worship* and *veneration* of him, will recommend him to this supream Being, who will not fail to reward him with inward satisfaction, if in no other way: and by the practice of all these duties together, he approves himself

self to his own mind, and is at peace with himself, which is no small matter. How different is the case of *one* who lives by *no* rule; has no regard to God or man; blindly follows his *appetites* and *passions*; and does whatsoever they bid him? what peace can such a one have; what true pleasure? his life must be all *disorder* and *confusion*; he must be perpetually cross'd and entangled in his affairs, and be never approved by himself, or esteemed and loved by others. And thus it will be if he hath *no* fears of *future* misery to haunt him. What if he has not? the present and inseparable *disorders* of a *vice* will make him miserable enough. I am aware, that men being supposed to believe *no* life after this, the *ungodly* and *sinners* would so far, and in this respect, have the better of those who addicted themselves to a *life of* *virtue*; that the former would be eas'd of their fears of an *after-reckoning*, and so have the stream of their sensual pleasures more pure and undisturbed, while the latter would lose much of the *pleasure* of a *good* *conscience*, and a *regular* *life*, and their souls naturally pursuing another and more perfect state without having any *hope* of it, would languish and pine away under the burden of their own desires. But what are we to infer from hence? why, that there *must* needs be *another* *life*; since the *belief* of

no such life would be a great *pleasure* to a *wicked*, but the most *melancholly thing* that could happen to a *good* man; and it can never be, that the *love* of God, and all that is good, should *naturally* and *necessarily* occasion *trouble* and *uneasiness* to the mind: and even this, could it be supposed, would not bring down *virtue* to a *level* with *vice*, much less sink it *lower*. Did the *good* man and the *bad* alike believe *no future* state, the pleasures of the *one* would be considerably abated by this, and of the *other* freed from the stings which now attend them; and yet this deduction from the *pleasures* of the *virtuous man* being made, those which remain would be more than enough to outweigh all the *pleasures* of *sin*.---After all, I am sensible all these advantages on the *side* of *virtue*, were there nothing else to recommend it, would not be enough to persuade the generality of mankind, hurried away by their *passions*, and by the next to irresistible influence of *custom* and *example*, to forsake the paths of *sin* and *vice*, and to chuse *virtue* for their guide and companion; which shows the *necessity* of some *stronger motives* to combat the temptations of *vice*, and work effectually on the minds of men. The greater number are so wedded to their lusts, that even now, when we set all the *allurements* and *terrors* of the *next life* before them,

they will not consent to a separation ; how much worse then would it be, if we had no *motives* from the consideration of another life, to work on their *affections*, and particularly their *hopes* and *fears* ? *virtue*, we may well think, would then be more generally neglected than it is, and *vice* more generally prevail : yet still it would be a man's *interest* to be *virtuous*, though it might not be his *duty* to practise all the same instances of self-denial as now, and of all men the *profligate* and *wicked* would be the *most miserable*. That I have said so much upon these heads, is not from an apprehension of any *uncertainty* in the notion of a *life to come* ; or as if it was possible for men thoroughly to persuade themselves that there is *no other* life, and so to have no concern at all about it ; but to shew the great *reasonableness* of those *duties* which God requires of us, in that it will be our *wisdom* to live in the main as God now commands us to live, even though we did not expect to reap *any advantage* from it in *another life*, as 'tis certain we shall.

5. IT is no part of the meaning of these words, that the *disciples of Jesus*, were they *deceived* in their *hopes* and *expectations* from him, would at all times, and *whatever circumstances* they were in, be *more miserable* than any *other sort of men*. This cannot be the apostle's meaning ; for as long as the
christian

christian firmly believes the truth of his religion, depends with the greatest assurance upon the accomplishment of every thing which his Lord and Master has promised him, and by his *faith* and *hopes* is engaged to lead a *christian* life ; as his leading such a life mightily tends to the confirmation of his faith and hopes ; as long as this is the case, and he is not called to suffer for his religion, but follows his conscience undisturbed, he must have great peace and pleasure, and receive more *present* advantage from his religion than other men are capable of, let the *issue* prove what it will. The good *christian* is not *more miserable* than other good men, but much *more happy*. What should make him more miserable ? not his *christianity*, if he has a *right notion* of it ; and if he has not, it is not *christianity*, but some *doctrines* of men which he mistakes for it, that are the occasion of all his *trouble* and *anxiety*. And if there be nothing to make him *more miserable*, he has a great deal to render him *more contented* and *happy*. For the *doctrines* of *christianity* are full of refreshment and consolation to all honest and upright minds ; none are excluded from its *privileges*, but those who exclude themselves ; none debarred an interest in its *promises*, who sincerely desire and endeavour after it. I cannot say that the *scheme* or *representation* which some

men have formed of *christianity* is thus encouraging ; but let them answer for that ; no religion is so well fitted to clear the *doubts* and *fears* of an inquisitive mind, and to give it ease and rest, as *true primitive christianity* ; *christianity*, I mean, as we have it in the *holy scriptures*, not in the writings of *fallible men*. In how *amiable* a manner does it represent the deity to us ? as *holy*, yet *merciful* ; as *hating* the *sins* of men, yet full of the tenderest *love* and *compassion* for them, and desirous of their salvation and happiness, without *any respect of persons*. What a most surprizing discovery have we of the *kindness* and *grace of God* in the method of our *redemption* by *Jesus Christ* ? what can be more *perfect* than the system of *evangelical laws* and *precepts* ? what more *engaging* than the *example* of our *Saviour* ? what more *consolatory* than the doctrine of *divine forgiveness* ? what more *exciting* than the offer of *assistance* and *grace sufficient* for us ? what more *animating* than the *promises* of *everlasting life* and *glory* ? where else can a *good man* be so well provided for as he is here ? The christian has all things necessary to his *abounding in hope and comfort* ; and so is in a happier condition than a *virtuous man*, without the knowledge of the gospel, can be : and *happier still* is his condition, when compared with that of a *wicked man*, what-
ever

ever religion he professes. In the practice of that exalted *piety* and *virtue* which the gospel demands, and in the enjoyment of those *prospects* it sets before him, and those *hopes* with which it inspires him, he hath joys and satisfactions of a far better kind than the *sinner* can pretend to. Should it be said, that a *christian* who *lives wickedly* is *as much more miserable* than *other wicked men*, as the *sincere christian* is *more happy* than any others who live *virtuously*; I own it true, and the denunciations and threatnings of the gospel will suggest the reason of it. But let his condition be never so *miserable*, it is his own *choice*: it is so with regard to every man who is engaged in a *vicious course*, all wickedness being *voluntary*; and much more with respect to the *professors* of christianity, who have much fairer opportunities to shake off the fetters of sin and corruption, and recover the true *freedom* of the soul. When I thus argue for the christian's being happier than other men in the *belief* and *practice* of the gospel, and the *hope* it begets in him of a happiness inexpressibly greater, which his Saviour is now preparing for him, though herein he should be only deluded; that I may not be mistaken, as if I thought there was any ground to *doubt* of the truth of christianity, I shall observe that this very thing, *viz.* the superior *fitness* of the christian

stian religion to make a *man virtuous* and *happy* by the belief and practice of it; and so much the more *virtuous* and *happy* as it is more firmly believed, and better understood, and more compleatly practised, is of itself next to a demonstration that it cannot be *false*; and much more when taken in conjunction with the many other arguments which are brought in defence of it. He who *believes* the gospel, and is entirely possess'd and actuated by the *temper* and *spirit* of it, makes the nearest approaches to the Deity, for *holiness* and *tranquility* of mind, that any one in this state of imperfection can do; from whence I think it evidently follows, that the *gospel* of *Christ*, which has this blessed effect, is a *divine* revelation, not a *human* invention.

6. IT is at best *very doubtful* whether the apostle's meaning be, that even at the time of his writing this *epistle*, when *christianity* was under *persecution*, the *followers* of *Christ* in *general* were of *all men most miserable*. It is to my apprehension much more probable, that he does not speak of the *whole* body of christian professors, and comparing them with the *heathen* world, give these latter the preference as to *present* happiness: for we must consider, that the persecution against the christians was not so general, but that *many*, if not *most* of them, especially in some places,

places, did in great measure continue to enjoy their *rights* and *properties* without being banish'd from their own homes, spoiled of their goods, and exposed to the danger of *martyrdom*. Now *these* were not so very *miserable*, whatever *others* might be, who were called to *fiery trials*, and *resisting unto blood*, *striving against sin*. Differences and disputes, no doubt, did frequently arise between them and their *unbelieving* relations and neighbours; there were *negative* discouragements, to which all were liable, that is, they were shut out from publick honours and employments, and had many an ill office done them by the *bigots* to *paganism*, and perhaps upon some occasions they might meet with greater insults, and worse usage: but they might well enough bear all this, and rejoice to think of the happy exchange they had made, of their old ignorance and superstition for a religion so every way excellent and divine, though they did upon the account of it undergo some inconveniencies. The *Jews*, indeed, who remained in their unbelief, were more implacably set against those of their countrymen, who listed themselves among the followers of Christ, than the *unconverted Gentiles* were; and made them feel their rage and malice in a more terrible manner. But then, besides that the greatest number of converts to

christianity were made from the *Gentiles*, a *christian*, who was well persuaded of his religion, and supported by the consolations of it, might suffer a great deal for the *cause* he had espoused, before he would have reason to conclude that his *present* condition was *worse* than his *past*; for if his ^p *sufferings in Christ abounded*, did not his *consolations in Christ Jesus abound much more*?

NONE of these senses then giving us the *true* meaning of the words, it remains that we proceed,

II. To consider the *case here suppos'd*, with the *assertion grounded upon it*. The *case suppos'd*, is, that the persons of whom the apostle speaks, when he saith, *we had no hope in Christ beyond this life*: the *assertion grounded upon this case suppos'd*, is, that *these persons were then of all men most miserable*.

I. WHO are the *persons* here intended by the apostle, when he saith, *if in this life only we have hope in Christ*? I answer, he *primarily*, if not *only*, speaks of the *apostles*, and other *witnesses* to christianity; at least, this to me, after the closest and most impartial examination, seems to be his meaning. And by *witnesses* here, I do not under-

^p 2 Cor. i. 5.

stand

stand those who gave *testimony* concerning their *belief* in *Christ*, by professing his name, and if occasion were, laying down their *lives* for the sake of it; but such only as bore *witness* to the *facts*, or wonderful things done in confirmation of christianity; particularly to the *resurrection* of their Master, that being the *fact* which the apostle here mentions, whom they pretended to have seen with their own eyes, after he was risen from the dead. These were emphatically ^a *Christ's witnesses*. *This Jesus has God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses*. Of these *witnesses* our apostle speaks, no farther back than the 15th verse of this chapter, *We are found false witnesses of God*, (i. e. if *Christ* be not risen) *because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ, whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not*. And why should we not conclude the very *same persons* to be meant in the 15th verse, and in the 19th, when he saith *we* in both? not *ye*, as in the 17th verse; if *Christ* be not risen, your *faith* is *vain*; *ye are yet in your sins*. Why does he alter his style, and say, *if in this life only we have hope in Christ, &c?* not because the *Corinthians* and all other christians were comprehended in the word *we*; but rather to distinguish between *some persons* and *others*; between the *teachers* of

^a Acts ii. 32. Luke xxiv. 48.

christianity,

christianity, and the *learners* ; between the *witnesses* of Christ's *resurrection*, and those who *received* this doctrine as true upon their testimony ; the *first* publishers of the gospel, and those who believed in Christ through their word. He expressly distinguishes them, *ver. 11.* *So we preach, and so ye believed :* and thus again, *ver. 14.* *if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.* If all this be well considered, I apprehend it will be owned no unlikely *conjecture*, that by *we* the apostle understands most eminently *those* to whom the publication of the christian doctrine was *first* committed, and upon whose *testimony*, as well as *preaching*, others were prevailed on to embrace the *faith of the gospel*, i. e. the apostles, and some other persons, who took upon them to be publick *witnesses* of Christ's *resurrection*. But will not the apostle *Paul* himself be hereby excluded ? could he testify concerning the *resurrection of Christ*, who was a *persecutor* of the christian church for a long time afterward ? he could not, surely, so much as believe that Christ was risen, while he persecuted his *followers* in every city ; and how then *was* he, or *could* he be a *witness* of this *fact* after he became a convert to christianity ? The answer is easy ; *St. Paul* had

Acts ix. 17, 27.

seen

seen Christ after his resurrection, though not while he was here upon earth, yet as he appeared to him when he was on his way to *Damascus*: he therefore appeals to the *Corinthians*, *Am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?* referring, 'tis probable, to the history of his conversion; and intimating, that if he had not *seen Christ*, he would have wanted one necessary qualification of an apostle; which was, to be able to *testify* that Christ was risen. Nor was this the only time that Christ appeared to this apostle, for he himself tells the *Jews*, that *when he was praying in the temple, he fell into a trance, and saw him, saying unto him, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.* If, besides these witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, any others were intended, they must be such as had been great sufferers for the cause, having lost their liberty, or their worldly substance, rather than they would deny the faith; who, tho' they did not pretend to be *immediate witnesses* of Christ's resurrection, yet in testimony of their stedfast belief of it, were willing to suffer the loss of all things upon his account, and were in continual danger of having their lives taken from them: and even *these* can

† 1 Cor. ix. 1.

† Acts xxii. 18.

be only intended in the *second* place. But I must confess I do not see any reason for including these, not comprehending how they could be justly represented as the *most miserable of all men*. Were they not fully satisfied of the truth of christianity? had they not the highest notion of the person of their Master? did they not believe him to be now *in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God*, ready to ^u receive their departing spirits, as they commended them into his hands, and able to reward all his faithful followers, for whom he had reserved ^w crowns of glory, which never fade away? Having this belief, and these hopes, what, tho' their profession of christianity cost them every thing dear to them in this world, were not their faith and hopes sufficient to bear them up, to sweeten the bitter cup, and put to flight all the terrors of death itself? yea, did ^x they not glory in tribulations, and go to their execution as if it had been to a festival entertainment? Admitting them therefore to be deceived, yet how could men who had so much inward peace, and triumph, and assurance, be, with any propriety, said to be of all men most miserable? I conclude therefore, that the apostle speaks here only of himself, and the other witnesses of Christ's resurrection. This point being settled,

^u Acts vii. 59. ^w 1 Pet. v. 4. ^x Rom. v. 3.

2. LET us now consider the *case supposed*, concerning these persons; *that in this life only they had hope in Christ*. Hope in Christ, is the same as *hope of advantage* by their *profession* of faith in Christ; and by having *hope in Christ only in this life*, is meant, their having, as the *disciples of Christ*, *nothing* to look for *after* this life, no reward from him, or upon his account. There is one thing which you are very carefully to observe, the *manner of expression*; it is not said, if *in this life only* we had reason to *hope in Christ*, as if they *had hope*, though *without reason*. The thing suppos'd is, that they had *no hope at all*, whether reasonable or unreasonable, real or imaginary; that they were without *hope itself*, as well as without any *solid ground* for it. And in truth, this must have been the very case, as to these persons, *if Christ was not risen*; for if *Christ was not risen indeed*, they could not believe that he was risen, not pretending to believe it upon the testimony of others, but asserting the thing as from their *own knowledge*. Now it was impossible they should know what *never was*; that they should have *seen Christ risen*, who was *not raised*; and, therefore, when they talked of their having seen their Master after he had been dead and buried, alive again; if they did not thus see him, they were *false witnesses*; they

they affirmed what was not only a *falsehood*, but what *they knew* to be *false*; consequently, having themselves forged the story of Christ's resurrection, by which they endeavoured to prove the truth of his religion, they could not really believe it to be true. They must know, in their hearts, that it was an imposture, an idle fable, with which they were about to amuse and deceive the world; telling them fine stories of another world, where their Master was advanced to the highest dignity and glory, how much soever he was despised here, and would give eternal life to as many as stedfastly adhered to him; by such arts as these, imposing on the belief of others, and raising in them mighty hopes and expectations, while they themselves, who were in the contrivance, had no *hope* of any benefit by Christ after this life. This must have been the *real* case, *if Christ was not risen*, as the apostle, for argument sake, supposes; for if he was not risen, they who said they had seen him when they knew that they had not, could not believe it, tho' they might persuade others to believe it upon their testimony; and not believing his *resurrection*, they could not believe his *religion*, nor *hope* to be rewarded by him in another life. All the advantages which such could hope to receive by preaching Christ crucified, and risen from the dead,

dead, must be in *this life* : and if this was all, 'tis very evident that as the apostle says, *they were of all men most miserable*. Let us then,

3. CONSIDER *this assertion* which the apostle grounds on the *case suppos'd*. If *Christ was not risen*, and consequently they who were the *vouchers* for this fact, had *no hope* in him but in *this life*, they must have been some of the *most miserable* of mankind upon these *two accounts*.

1. BECAUSE their *outward condition* was *most miserable* : and,

2. HAVING *nothing* to *ballance* against their *sufferings* and *afflictions*, and to *support* them under these, they would have been *miserable* to their own *inward sense* and *feeling*.

1. IT appears from their *history*, that the *outward condition* of these *witnesses* of Christ was *most miserable*. It is not easy to conceive how it could be much worse ; for they were *bated of all men* for their *Master's sake*, and for the sake of the *testimony* which they gave concerning his resurrection, by which they drew away so many after them. They who still continued in their unbelief, and opposition to the gospel, seeing others give credit to the *publishers* of the christian doctrine, would naturally have their anger and malice awakened by it ; and the greater the numbers were who fell off to their
2 party,

party, would be the more warmly set both against the *converters* and the *converted*; especially against the former, hoping, that if they could take off the heads and leaders of the faction, this new sect would quickly dwindle away. And accordingly we find that the rage of the enemies of christianity was principally levelled against *these*, and the greatest part of the storm fell upon their heads: they were not only ^y *every where spoken against* (as the whole *sect* of the *christians* was) but every where met with contempt and ill-usage; were ^z *accounted the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things*, and treated accordingly: they enjoyed nothing of the wealth, or power, or honours of the world, and were persecuted by those who were in possession of these; the world rose in arms against them, as if they had been the common enemies and pests of mankind. There are few persons who have not some place which they call their *home*, and for which they have a particular fondness, and who have not friends and relations whom they love and esteem, and in whose affection and society they place a great part of the happiness of their lives; but all this the *apostles* were obliged to forego; ^a *they endured hunger, and thirst, and*

^y Acts xxviii. 22.^z 1 Cor. iv. 13.^a 2 Cor. xi. 23, &c.

cold,

cold, and weariness; were in deaths often: had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonments: such were the ^b marks of the Lord Jesus Christ, which they bore in their bodies; all these they suffered in their outward condition for the testimony which they held; so that if they had no more comfort within than they had from without, they were miserable indeed: and that this was the case is manifest, if Christ was not risen. And therefore I add,

2. As their outward condition was most miserable, so having nothing to ballance against their sufferings and afflictions to support them under these, they would have been most miserable to their own inward sense and feeling; for what was there that could bear them above such a sea of adversity, or even keep them from sinking, and being over-whelmed in it? not their hopes of future rest and happiness, for they are here supposed to have had no such hopes: not the ^c testimony of their consciences, that in simplicity and godly sincerity they had their conversation in the world. It would have been no part of their simplicity and sincerity to invent and propagate a falsehood; nor could they expect the testimony of conscience, while they testified of God that he raised up

^b Gal. vi. 17.

^c 2 Cor. i. 12.

Jesus Christ, whom he raised not up: not any hopes they had from the present world; they could never imagine they should find their account in such an ill-contriv'd fable as this, if it was one. What is related of one of the heads of the romish church, may be true enough, that he should say to some of his confidants, What a profitable fable has this of Christ been to us! meaning Popery, which he confounded with Christianity; and it must be own'd that Popery has been an inexhaustible mine of wealth to the owners: but as for the apostles, and other leaders of christianity, they might rather have cried out, How much has this story of a crucified and a risen Jesus cost us! and how much more will it! So that you see if the apostles had been false witnesses, they would have had none of those supports and consolations which usually bear men up under outward pressures; they would have had heaven and earth against them, their own consciences within, as well as the main stream of the world without; their own hearts condemning them, they must have been without all confidence towards God; and having no hope towards God, they could have no hope (if they believed another life) that he would show them any favour there. On the contrary, they had nothing else to expect but to be opposed by his providence in this world, and
destroyed

destroyed by his vengeance in the next : and thus they must be compleatly miserable by means of this concurrence of inward and outward troubles. 'Tho' a man's conscience be against him, he may bear it out for a while, if he has the world for him ; and much more may he despise the enmity of the world, if he has God and conscience on his side, and the prospect of a future everlasting reward before him : but what must be his condition when he has nothing to comfort him, but all is dark and threatening whithersoever he turns his eye, inward or outward, to the present state of things, or that to come ? Now this must have been the very condition of the apostles, supposing them to have known that Christ was not risen, at the same time that they witnessed he was ; for, knowing him not to be risen, they would have had no hope in him beyond this life ; and for want of this hope, would have been most miserable.

I HAVE now considered the *case supposed*, with the *assertion grounded upon it* : The *case supposed* is, that the persons of whom the apostle is speaking, *had no hope in Christ beyond this life* ; the *assertion grounded upon the case suppos'd*, is, that *these persons were then of all men most miserable. ----* It remains,

III. THAT I point out the *argument* which is couch'd in this reasoning of the apostle for the *truth* of the *gospel*, and show its strength, *viz.* that since the *persons* intended here would have been thus *miserable*, if in *this life only* they had *hope in Christ*; it is therefore certain that their *hope* in Christ *was not confined to this life*; and consequently that as they *affirmed*, so they *knew* him to be *risen from the dead*; the consequence of which is, that *Christ being risen, our faith is not vain*.

THE argument is plain, whether we consider the apostles only *as men*, or as *good men*, or put the case of their having been *wicked men*.

I. IF we consider the *apostles* only *as men*, it is impossible they should have acted such a part as *making themselves miserable*, by *bearing witness* to a *known falshood*. The apostles had the *same senses* and *passions* as other men, and the *same reason*; they had the *same natural senses and passions*: objects made the *same impressions* upon them as upon other men; *pain*, and *poverty*, and *contempt*, were as grievous to them as to the rest of mankind: they were not so framed as *naturally* to desire those things which all other men *naturally* avoid; or to receive
I
pleasure

pleasure and satisfaction from the same things, which give all other men trouble and pain. *Self-love* was a necessary part of their nature, as it is of all mankind; and they had the same passions of *hope* and *fear*, of *joy* and *sorrow*, which discover themselves in all the persons with whom we are acquainted; that is, in short the *apostles* had the *same* human nature that we have, and were liable to all the *same* weaknesses: and as they had the same *senses* and *passions* as other men, so they had the *same* common understanding; they were neither *fools* nor *madmen*. This is evident from their *writings*, and from the *success* they met with in the world. For if a person who wants *reason*, or whose *reason* is disturbed, may compose such a history as the *gospels* of St. *Matthew* or St. *John*, or give such an account of the nature and will of God, and of the duty and happiness of man, as that we meet with in the whole *new testament*, 'tis impossible there should be any marks of distinction between *knowledge* and *ignorance*, between *sober reason* and *distraction*. The *apostles* then must be allowed to have had their share of *reason* and *common sense*, in order to preach and write in the manner they did: and provided they had but a *common* degree of understanding, they could not but know that such an undertaking, had they set out with a false

story, could never turn to account ; that they had nothing to look for upon this supposition but *shame* and *misery*. They could never expect it would be otherwise than they found it, they could not but reckon upon *ill usage* ; but as for the success they met with, they had no manner of reason to expect it ; but on the contrary, had just ground to conclude, that they themselves should be crushed, and their attempt come to nothing. And foreseeing this, they would never have engaged, or after a little opposition, would have given up their cause ; this being the only way to escape the storm which they had raised against them. Now what is the consequence from hence ? why plainly this, that the apostles *had not their hope in Christ only in this life* ; that they *knew* him to be *risen from the dead*, and that partly by the confidence with which the truth inspir'd them, and partly by the assistance and support which was *supernaturally* afforded them, they were encouraged to go forth against all opposition, and enabled to overcome it. This is an *easy account* of their *voluntarily* submitting to so many inconveniencies in carrying on the cause of christianity, of which otherwise it will be impossible to give any tolerable account at all.

2. IF we consider the *apostles*, not only as *men*, but as *good men*, how then will the

argument stand? we shall find the strength and evidence of it to be still encreasing: for no one, surely, who deserved the name of a *good man*, would *solemnly* avouch a *known falsehood*; much less in an affair of such *consequence*; and still less could he tell it in the *name of God*, whatever considerations there might be of worldly gain to tempt him to it: and would he then, out of his great love to a lie, expose himself to be *miserable* for it in *this world*, and the *next*? A *falsehood* can never be worth so much as this in the account of a *good man*: such a one may be supposed to sacrifice his life with the greatest chearfulness for *truth's sake*, or in opposition to what he knows to be an error, that it may not pass down to posterity for truth; but would he suffer and die in defence of a *falsehood*, only that it might have the greater appearance of truth, and spread to distant places and times? this is too absurd to be imagined. Shall we therefore give way to a suspicion that the *apostles* might be *ill men*? Not to argue the *injustice* of such a suspicion, that the *men* themselves were *bad*, when their *lives* and *actions* were *good*; not to urge this, because it does not fall in my way at present, let us

3. PUT the case of the apostles having been men of *corrupt minds*; I say, then 'tis not possible they should have chosen the way

they did ; for christianity consists of *two* parts, *viz. facts* and *doctrines*. Among the *facts*, that of *Christ's resurrection* from the dead is one of the *principal* ; the *doctrines*, which this and other *facts* were designed to confirm are in substance, " that God, by the " gospel, calls men to lead a *holy* and *heavenly* " life ; and to engage them to it, proposes a " variety of the most powerful motives and en- " couragements." Now tho' it may be agree- able enough to the character and inclinations of a *wicked man* to give evidence to a *fact* which he knows to be false ; yet when the doctrine which is to be proved by this *fact* is levelled against all sorts of vice and wicked- ness, and tends to promote all manner of goodness and piety, for certain no man, who was an enemy to the cause of God and reli- gion, would enter into a confederacy to pro- mote it at the hazard of his life, and of every thing dear to him in this world. Let a man love a *lie* never so well, he would not be the inventor or spreader of a *lie*, which was to make way for the belief of a religion which condemned *lying*, and every other evil work, much less would he be content- ed to *live* and *die miserable* in defence of such a *lie*. Our Saviour's argument, to prove that his *miracles* could not be wrought by the assistance of wicked spirits, may be ap- plied with the same evidence to show, that
the

the witnesses of his resurrection could not be wicked men. ^d If Satan cast out Satan, how shall his kingdom stand? that is, "considering the nature and design of the doctrines which Christ taught, and that his miracles were the seal of his doctrine, we cannot suppose that the devil (if he had been able to do it) would have concurred to raise the credit of such a doctrine, by enabling the teacher of it to work miracles, unless he had a mind to destroy his own interest and kingdom amongst men."

The same may we say here of wicked men, that hating righteousness, and loving iniquity, they would not have forged the story of Christ's resurrection, when for their testimony to the truth of it they should suffer so much, and get nothing by its being believed, but that the gospel would be believed too, which commands every thing that is good, and forbids every thing that is sinful and evil. We may put the argument in another light, if the witnesses of Christ's resurrection were wicked men, either they believed a future state, or they did not. If they believed a future state, they could not but have this thought, that they should not deny themselves so much in this world, by leading a life of universal holiness and true piety, as they should in preaching the resurrection of Christ; and that

^d Matt. xii. 26.

the end of a holy life would certainly be happy : whereas after having suffered for being *false witnesses of God* in this world, they must expect to suffer worse things for it in the next ; and therefore instead of setting themselves to contrive and carry on a *falsehood*, they would rather have resolved to become *good men*, that after a little self-denial for a few years, they might enjoy the rewards of an everlasting state. If on the contrary, they *did not believe* any life to come, then it would have been natural for them to argue in the manner which St. Paul mentions in the thirty-second verse, *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we die.* “ We
“ shall die very soon, and after death shall
“ be as if we had never been ; our wisdom
“ therefore is to make the best of the present life, avoiding sufferings as much as
“ possible, (especially sufferings for a *lie*,
“ by which we can hope to gain nothing in
“ the end) and seeking our ease and pleasure in every action and design.” *The conclusion is*, that the *apostles*, when they taught that Christ was risen, were true witnesses, and consequently that we have the greatest reason to believe the truth of his religion ; since they could not have been false witnesses without making themselves miserable by it, which it is *absurd* to suppose they would do, whether we consider them only

as *men*, having the *same* senses and passions as others, and a good degree of *common* understanding, or under the character of *good* men or *bad*. This I think is *next* to a *demonstration*, that our *faith in Christ is not vain and groundless*.— I'll conclude this Inquiry with a few reflections.

III. FROM the whole I infer, that they who *suffered* most for christianity, not having *in this life only hope in Christ*, but having through the merits of their Saviour a *well-grounded hope* of a *blessed immortality*, were *not of all men most miserable*. They were not so much to be *pitied* as *admired*; they did not *suffer* so much in the flesh, as they *enjoyed* in the spirit; while their *outward man decayed daily*, *their inward man was renew'd day by day*. Instead therefore of being discouraged by the example of the *apostles*, and other *witnesses* of our Lord and Saviour from entering into the service of such a master, all persons who consider things thoroughly would regard it as a fair invitation, and the highest encouragement to embark in the same cause; when they saw how steady those *witnesses* were in the testimony they gave, what an *art* they had of enjoying affliction itself, and how calm they appeared to be in the midst of all the storms and tempests which were raised a-

2 Cor. iv. 16.

round

round them : how unlike are these men to the rest of the world ! they can *rejoice in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and that their hope will never make them ashamed.* And why then should we not take this *person* for our Lord and master, who, according to what these men with one voice affirm of him, is *risen from the dead, and become Lord of all things* ? why should we not list ourselves under him as the *captain of our salvation*, and determine to follow his conduct, whatsoever we may be called to suffer ; since ^g *the light and momentary afflictions of this life are not to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in all them that loved this Saviour* ? After this manner it was natural for all sober considerate persons to reason, who observed the *witnesses of Christ's resurrection*, and weighed their testimony. What though they exposed themselves to a great many hardships and inconveniencies for the *cause of Christ*, it was plain they *knew* it to be the *cause of God*, and therefore were not and could not be very *miserable* in the worst circumstances to which they could be reduced, being ^h *begotten by the resurrection of Christ to the lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, and unde-*

^f 2 Cor. iv. 17. ^g 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

filed,

filed, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them.

2. WHAT reason of *thankfulness* to God have we who at *our ease* reap so many advantages from all that the *apostles* and *other witnesses* of our blessed Saviour taught, and did, and suffered! *they labour'd*, and *we are entred into their labours*; they *suffered* for that religion, which we enjoy without *suffering* for it: their constancy under so many trials is a confirmation of our belief of the truth of their testimony which they sealed with their blood; and a most powerful motive to bear up with christian patience and courage under the ordinary troubles and afflictions of life, to which all men, in a greater or less degree, are liable. Shall I think my self *miserable*, because I have my portion of the disappointments and calamities of this world, when my portion is no more than *common*; and the *first christians*, who, besides what is *common* to men, *endured* likewise a *great fight of persecutions*, did not betray any such impatience or weakness? and what enabled them to bear up under heavier pressures than ours can be, but their *hope in Christ*? *Hope in Christ* then is a *sufficient* support in a time of *persecution*, and much more in *peaceable* times, when merely as *christians* we are without all trouble and molestation. And whose fault is it if we have

have not this *hope*? or if this *hope* be not sufficient to fortify our timorous hearts, and to cheer our drooping spirits? Let us take the proper ways to obtain it, and we shall not be without *hope*; as having *hope*, we shall never be without *comfort*: wherefore,

3. LET us endeavour that our *hope in Christ* may be more abounding. To this end, let us consider the *certainty* of the reward promised in the gospel, together with its *incomparable worth* and *excellency*; the *terms* upon which we may secure a title to it, and the *reasonableness* of them; and finally, let us resolve, that by *divine assistance*, we will walk more exactly according to our rule; knowing this, that in the same proportion as we grow in *holiness*, we shall be likely to grow in *hope* and *comfort*.

1. LET us consider the *certainty* of the reward promised in the gospel, together with the *incomparable worth* and *excellency* of it. Is it not *certain* that the gospel does promise to all those who obey it, *salvation* and *happiness* in another life? This is not doubted, and cannot be doubted by any who read the gospel; this promise being frequently repeated, and in a variety of expressions throughout the writings of the new testament. And though the certainty of the truth of this promise is not altogether the same, as of the existence of the promise it self,

self, yet it is enough to satisfy any reasonable person. *That God is true*, is a dictate of natural reason, and what no one, who believes a God, has the least doubt of. *That God cannot but fulfil his promises*, is every whit as evident as that he is *true and faithful*; the *truth* and *faithfulness* of God consisting in this very thing, and his *power* being ever *almighty*. But hath God really promised eternal life by *Jesus Christ*, or is this which is called a *divine promise*, only an *invention* of men to amuse the world withal? If there be any room for doubt or question, it must be here; but how little room there is for it, we shall soon be sensible, if we duly consider, and rightly understand, what has been offered on this subject, not to mention the many other arguments which are brought in proof of christianity. If the *witnesses* of *Christ's resurrection* had not been *true witnesses*, they would have had *no hope* in him beyond this life, and so would have been the *most miserable* of men; upon which account we may be confident they would not have testified any such thing, if they had not been *certain* of the *truth* of it; and if *Christ rose from the dead*, he was a *true prophet*; if he was a *true prophet*, he taught a *true doctrine*; and so likewise did his *apostles*, whom he commissioned to teach in his name; and therefore a state of felicity and

and glory after this life, being confessedly a doctrine of christianity, we have no ground to call the truth of it in question. And do we consider the *incomparable greatness* and *excellency* of the *reward* which the gospel promises? The *object* of the christian's *hope* is not some small matter, unless you reckon it a small matter to have the hope of *souls* made *perfect* in all their faculties, and *bodies* in all their parts and members, and these *bodies* and *souls* united in the bands of an *everlasting life*; unless you esteem it a small matter to *see* and *enjoy the supream Good*, to *know and love God*, and to be *known and lov'd by him*, to be *freed from all evils*, sinful and penal, and put in possession of every thing necessary to our *complete happiness*, whether as to the *place*, the *company*, or our *employment*: when we *attend* to these things, and bring them *home* to our minds, what a vigour must they infuse into our hopes and resolutions!

2. LET us consider the *terms* upon which we may secure a title to the future reward, and the *great reasonableness* of them. What are the *terms* but that from a principle of *faith* in God through *Jesus Christ*, and *love* to him, we lead a *sober, righteous, and godly* life; relying upon the *sacrifice* and *intercession* of Christ for the pardon of all our sins, and the acceptance of our persons
and

and performances? And can any *terms* be more equitable than these? *In keeping* the commands of the gospel, is there not a *present* reward? Is not that person who lives in *all good conscience*, a much *happier* man than any one of a contrary character? Is it not *reasonable* that we should *repent* if we have done *amiss*? and that God having graciously appointed a *Mediator* between himself and the sinful sons of men, we should *thankfully accept* his mediation, and *humbly depend* upon it? Are not these things *reasonable in themselves*, and rendered much more so by the consideration of that *everlasting reward* which is annexed to them?

Finally, LET us *resolve*, that by *divine assistance* we will walk more exactly according to our *rule*; knowing this, that in the same proportion as we grow in *holiness*, we shall be likely to grow in *hope* and *comfort*. We are to remember, that there is a great difference between *faith* in *Christ*, and actual and immediate *hope* in him; we must so far believe in *Christ* as to be persuaded that all those who submit to the *terms* of the gospel covenant shall enter into life; but then, in order to have an immediate and well-grounded *hope* of the future felicity, we must not only *believe* the truth of the gospel, but *live* agreeably to the *rules* and *precepts* of it. If we do this, we shall have

good ground of *hope* ; and if we are careful of every part of our behaviour, and labour to excel in every grace and virtue of the christian life, the reason we have for *hope* will appear so much the more plain and evident. Let us all lay this seriously to heart (as it well deserves our consideration) and endeavour to *know more of the power of Christ's resurrection*, raising us above the love of this world, engaging us to lead a devout and heavenly life ; drawing forth our desires after spiritual and unseen things, and diffusing life, and spirit, and comfort thro' all the duties we perform, and all the services and trials we are called to in our christian cause.



BRITISH
MUSEUM

INDEX



I N D E X

TO THE

Preceding VOLUME of TRACTS.

A

Adoration, God's not needing it is the very ground upon which it becomes due, 30.

Affections and passions, how the words are differently used, 229. How they may signify the same thing, 230. See *Passions*.

Agony of Christ in the garden, whence it probably arose, 373, 374.

Alexander the Great, of his killing *Clytus*, and what effect the notion of fate had upon him, 96, 97.

Anger, why the word *passion* is usually restrained to it, 228. *Cicero's* advice to his brother about it, 277.

Annihilation, the soul dreads it, 403.

Apostles, Christ's witnesses, 425. Their sufferings for the sake of the gospel, 431, 432. Urged as a proof of Christ's resurrection, and the truth of his religion, 436, &c.

Articles of faith, mischief of imposing them, 166.

Atheism, superstition gives rise to it, 84, 85.

Atonement of Christ, 383, 384.

Authority, the claim of it in matters of faith and conscience, the grand source of the corruption of religion, 152.

B

BABES in a literal and in a figurative sense, 312, 313.

Being and attributes of God. See *God*.

Being necessarily existing, there must be one such, 6.

He must be infinitely perfect, 7. There can be but one such, 20.

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

- Benevolence*, on what account it may be called a rational instinct, 73, 74. Mr. *Hutcheson's* notion of it examined, 74, &c. The virtue of it not to be confounded with the instinct, *ibid.* The difference between that which is the fruit of mere instinct, and that which proceeds from reason, 85, &c.
- Boaily* gratifications, we must observe a proper medium with respect to them, in order to govern our passions, 269.

C

- C**HANCE can be the original of nothing, 5. It is a mere empty name, 334.
- Charles I.* his murder not the act of the nation, 220.
- Children*, an enquiry how far they are concerned in their parents sins, 197. How far their parents sins may affect them, 198. So far as to intercept or cut off those privileges to which they have no natural right, *ibid.* To occasion their being punished for their own sins, 201. The passage in *Ezekiel*, and the second commandment relating to this matter, considered, 203, 204. How far it is their duty to confess their parents sins, 205, 210, &c. In what sense they are not obliged to confess them, 214, 215, 216. The whole applied to the thirtieth of *January*, 217, &c.
- Christ*, his crucifixion a surprising event, 361. Why he chose to complain of God's forsaking him in the words of the xxii^d Psalm, 362, 364. The stile he makes use of denotes his innocence, 366. His choice of God for his God, 367. His filial trust and confidence in him, *ibid.* In what sense he was forsaken of God in his passion, 368. This does not imply that God was angry with him, *ibid.* Or that he thought he was, 371. Of his agony in the garden, 373. The true meaning of his complaint of God's forsaking him, 375, 376, &c. He died before nature was spent, 379, 380. A reflection concerning his exaltation, 380. The reasons of God's forsaking him, 381. To add the greater perfection to his example, 382. To encrease the perfection of his atonement, 383. And the perfection of his priesthood, 385. To compleat his victory,

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

- tory, and render his triumph the more glorious, 387. His sufferings should endear him to us, 389. And may yield us instruction and consolation, 390. His resurrection proved, 436, &c.
- Christianity*, its excellency, 420. Proved to be true from the conduct of the apostles, 436, &c.
- Christians* happier than other men in the belief and practice of the gospel, even though they should be mistaken, 418. This urged as a proof of it, 421, 422.
- Churches*. See *Societies*.
- Cicero*, his advice to his brother about anger, 277.
- Clarke*, doctor, a passage of his concerning liberty, considered, 126.
- Collier*, his notion of space and extension refuted, 9.
- Communion*, christian, the terms of it considered, 157, &c. The general rule about it, 161. Mere difference in opinions no bar to it, 161, 162. Objections made by those who are for narrowing its bounds, considered, 170, &c.
- Condescension* of God in taking care of man, 334, 345.
- Confession*, its general meaning, 206.
- Conqueror*, the noblest, is he who conquers himself, 300.
- Conscience*, what, 33. It is an incontestable argument of human liberty, 121. The importance of having it rightly informed, 154, 155.
- Consequences*, of drawing them from revealed principles, 40, 41.
- Conversation*, christian, well regulated affections have a happy influence upon it, 292.
- I Corinth. xv. 19.* considered, 397, &c. Several notions that have no manner of foundation in the words, 401, 407, 411, 414, 418, 422. The persons intended by the apostle, 424. The case supposed concerning them, 429. The assertion grounded upon it, 431. The argument couched in this passage for the truth of the gospel, 436, &c. Practical reflections, 443, 445, 446.
- Cotta*, his tenderness and caution, lest he should seem to say any thing to countenance vice, 99.

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

Creator of the world, that there can be but one, 25.

That there can be no other God but he, 27.

Credit and honour resulting from a due government of our passions and affections, 298, &c.

D

D*AVID* a type of Christ, 364.

Desertion, external and internal, 390, 391.

Dissenters vindicated, 218.

Doctrines, we cannot now argue from them to the men, 184.

E

E*Nthusiasm* described, 64.

Eternity, or a duration without beginning, must belong to the necessarily-existent Being, 7.

Exaltation of Christ, 380, 381.

Example of Christ, particularly in his sufferings, 382, 383.

Existence, the certainty of it, or that something does exist, 3. No being can exist without some adequate reason or ground of its existence, 4. The Being which contains in it self the reason of its own existence, is necessarily existent, 6. See *God*.

Extension. See *Space*.

F

F*asting*, of setting apart days of it for the sins of our fathers, 215. And for some particular sin of our fathers, in which we do not imitate them, 216. This applied to the thirtieth of *January*, 217, &c. The absurdity of perpetuating such fasts, 222.

Fate, of the advocates for it, 93. Whether the notion of it be useful or pernicious to society, 94, 95. An example of the effect of this notion upon *Alexander the Great*, 96, 97. And upon some *Roman* legions, 97, 98. The belief of it destructive to morality, 98. It is commonly the refuge of the slothful and the vicious, 141.

Fear of a supreme power, why it may be called a rational instinct, 73, 74. When it proceeds from mere instinct, and when from reason, 79, &c.

Fear of death, how it may be qualified in good men, 273.

Fear

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

Fear of God, its excellent nature and tendency to remove the fear of men, 278, 279.

First mover, that there must be one, and what he must be, 106.

Frederick III. emperor, his wise remark upon a prosperous wicked man, 404.

Free agent, that there must be one at least, viz. God, 109. Consequently there may be others, 110. That man is a free agent, 116, &c.

Freedom of human actions, of the disputes about it, 93. The notions of the author of the *Philosophical Enquiry*, &c. upon this point, considered, *ibid.* &c. See *Liberty*.

Fundamentals, of mens erring in them, 185.

Future state believed by the Jews and Gentiles, and may be proved by reason, or the light of nature, 402, 403.

G

G*LORY* of God promoted by the union of christians among themselves, 189, 190.

G*OD*, a brief demonstration of his being and attributes, in several propositions, 3, &c. Prop. I. Something now exists, 3. Prop. II. No Being can exist without some adequate reason or ground of its existence, either in the being it self, or without it, in some other being, 4. Prop. III. Though the reason of the existence of the greater part of beings is external, or in some being before them, from whom they derived their original; yet this cannot be affirmed of all beings, and of every being, 5, 6. Prop. IV. The being which contains in it self the reason of its own existence, cannot but exist, or is necessarily existing, 6. Prop. V. A being necessarily existing, must be an infinitely perfect Being, 7. He must be eternal, or without beginning, *ibid.* Immense, 8. Simple, or without parts, 11. Omniscient, 13. Omnipotent, 14. A perfectly free agent, 16. Possess'd of every moral perfection in the greatest possible degree, 18. Immutable and immortal, 19. Prop. VI. There is but one necessarily existent and infinitely perfect Being, 20.

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

GOD, an argument for his unity, 22, &c. We have *no reason* to believe or suppose there is *more than one God*, 24. We have *very good reason* to believe that *no more than one God* at first made, and consequently still *preserves* this world, 25. We *do not want reason* firmly to believe that there is *absolutely but one God*; or, that, besides the God who formed this world, there is *no other*, 27. The heathens used the word *God* in a different sense from what we do, 29.

GOD, how reason may be attributed to him, 34, 35. Of passions being ascribed to him, 232. Not beneath him to take care of his works, and particularly man, 323, &c. His surprising greatness, 330. His condescension in taking care of man, 334. An exhortation to glorify him for his greatness, 350. And for his goodness, 351.

Good man, his great characteristick, 243.

Greatness of God displayed in his works, particularly the heavens, 330, &c.

H

HEAVENS, in what sense they are more especially the Lord's, 316. Their greatness, 321. An obvious argument of the surprising greatness of God, 330.

Heresies mentioned by the apostle *Paul*, what they were, 173, &c.

Heretic, whom *Titus* was to reject, what he was, 177, 178.

Hope in Christ the christian's support, 445. How it may be confirmed, 446.

Horace, an observation upon an ode of his, 213.

Hutcheson, Mr. his notion of virtue and benevolence examined, 74, &c.

I

JEWS, their peculiar circumstances, and why they were to confess their fathers sins, 207. A saying of theirs about the spirit of prophecy, 305. They believed a future state, 402.

Imagination should be under the conduct of reason, 63. The force of it in some persons, 65. It hath nothing to do in the trial of truth, 71.

Immensity,

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

- Immensety*, or a presence without bounds, must belong to the necessarily existent Being, 8.
Immutability and *immortality* must belong to the necessarily existent Being, 19.
Imputation of sin to Christ, in a proper sense, the absurdity of that doctrine, 369.
Inclinations ought to be under the controul of reason, 58. Of those of a middle kind, and how far they are to be attended to, 61.
Indifference about what we believe condemned, 188.
Infants, God's wonderful care of them a remarkable instance of providence, 312, 313.
Infinite wisdom implied in infinite knowledge, 14.
Infinity the ground of necessary existence, 7.
Instinct, two remarkable differences between it and reason, 37.
Jonah, his fit of passion, 268.
Josephus, his reasoning when he is pleading for a friendly usage of the Jews, 192.
Judaizers, their practices, 182.
Judgment blinded by passion, 269.

K

- K***ING*, bishop, an hypothesis of his disproved, 132.
Knowledge, infinite, implies infinite wisdom, 14.

L

- L***ibertine* writings, and their mischievous tendency, 100, 101, 102.
Liberty, the most perfect, must belong to the necessarily existent Being, 16.
Liberty of human actions, of the disputes about it, 93. Defended, 103, &c. The true notion of it, 104. That there must be a liberty of action somewhere, 106. What is that liberty in human actions pleaded for, 111. In what sense it is a perfection, 111, 112. How the argument for it from human rewards and punishments may be evaded, 117, 118. It is proved from the consideration of the divine perfections, 118. From every man's own conscience, 121. Of the degrees of it, 127. Objections

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

- tions against it answered, 127, &c. Object. 1. from *Hobbs* and *Spinoza*, which affects the possibility of liberty, 127. Object. 2. That the will *must* yield it self to the greatest appearing good, or *necessarily* follows the last dictate of the understanding, considered and answered, 129, &c. Object. 3. From the divine prescience, considered, 138.
- Life*, the present, in it self considered, not a wretched or miserable state, 407.
- Life and immortality*, how brought to light by the gospel, 405.
- Locke*, Mr. of his opinion, that the will is always determined by the most pressing uneasiness, 130.
- Love* of God and our neighbour, a remedy against the love of the world, 279, 280.

M

- MAN*, reason is to him what instinct is to other creatures, 35, 36. Which shews that he is designed for a nobler end, 38, 39. He has an animal and a rational part, 59, 136. That he is a free agent, demonstrated, 116, &c. The dignity of his nature, 318. He is considered as fallen and corrupted; and so in a state of great weakness, indigence, and imperfection, 336. The goodness of God to him, 339. See *Psalms* viii.
- Mary*, queen, how the bishops charged the court, and the court the bishops, with the cruelties in her reign, 168, 169.
- Material* world not self-existent, 12.
- Matter* cannot move it self, 107, 108.
- Matthew* xxvii. 46. explained, 361, &c.
- Men*, their different natures and characters, and how far they should be attended to, 62, 63.
- Mind*, three acts of it, as conversant about human actions, 131.
- Moral* good and evil, their infallible criterion, 48. What is not, and what is the proper immediate subject of them, 48, 49.
- Moral* perfections, the highest must belong to the necessarily existent Being, 18.

Morality,

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

Morality, its principles have the same degree of authority, whether innate or not, 42, 43.

Motion, two sorts of, according to *Plato*, 104. Its principle not in matter, 107.

N

N*NATURE* of things, right reason consists in a conformity of the judging faculty to it, 45. They have been taken in common use for equivalent terms, 47. It is unchangeable, 48.

Necessary existence, what, 6. It implies all infinite perfections, 7, &c.

Necessity, how distinguished, 104. Of external or physical necessity, *ibid.* Of internal or moral necessity, 110. Of the distinction between moral and mechanical necessity, 114, 115.

Negative penalties for differences in religion, unjust, 169.

Novelty essential to the *ridiculous*, 69.

O

O*Mnipotence*, an attribute of the necessarily existent Being, 14.

Omniscience, an attribute of the necessarily existent Being, 13.

Opinions, mere difference in them no bar to communion, 161, 162. The mischief and unreasonableness of rejecting persons from communion on that account, 164. Objections from scripture considered and answered, 170, &c. 180.

P

P*ARENTS*. See *Children*.

Passions, on the government of them, 227. What they are, and the difference between them and pure affections, 228, 229. They are in their own nature indifferent, 232. And may be useful, 234. We are all in some good degree able to govern them, *ibid.* It is our indispensable duty to set our selves to govern them, 239. Wherein the due government of them consists, 240. With respect to their general object, *ibid.* With respect to their principal

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

- principal object, 242. With respect to their degree, 245. Three signs of their being excessive, 249, 250, 251. The government of them takes in both the inward emotion, and the outward behaviour, 253. It must be universal, 256. Constant and habitual, 259. In it we must act from conscience towards God, 261. Rules for the government of our passions, 263. To improve in sound knowledge, *ibid.* To govern our thoughts, 265. To consider that the truest judgment of the passions is that we make when we are free from them, and not when under their power, 267. To use a proper medium in respect of bodily gratifications, 269. To make the object familiar, or keep out of its way, according as one or the other tends to abate the passion, 272. To watch against the beginnings of passion, 275. To conquer one passion by the help of another, 278. To remember our dependence on God, and exert the powers we have, 282. To examine the progress we have made, &c. 284, 285, 286, 287. Motives to the government of our passions, 289, 292, 295, 298, 304, 305. An exhortation to it, 306.
- Peace* and pleasure attend upon well-regulated affections, 295.
- Persecution* contrary to natural equity, and to the temper and spirit of the gospel, 167, 168.
- Piety* and devotion, well-regulated affections have a happy influence upon the exercises of it, 289.
- Philosophical enquiry concerning human liberty*, examined, 93, &c. Of the author's distinction between moral and mechanical necessity, 114.
- Pleasures*, two sorts of, 137.
- Polytheism* of the heathen, what it was, 29. Its rise, 74.
- Pope*, the saying of one, 434.
- Prayer*, its mighty efficacy, 314.
- Presbyterians*, their political principles vindicated, 217, 218.
- Prescience*, the difficulty of reconciling it with free agency, considered, 138, &c.
- Priesthood* of Christ, its perfection, 385.

Principles,

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

Principles, there is greater danger of mens taking up with wrong ones, than of arguing wrong from the principles assumed, 43.

Private judgment in religion, the right of it asserted and proved, 147. Sincere examination necessary to the forming of it, 154.

Protestants, their practices generally contradictory to their principle of *private judgment*, 151.

Prudence, what, 33.

Psalms viii. its sublime exordium, 311. The second verse explained, 312, 313. How our Saviour accommodates it, 315. An enquiry into the true sense of ver. 3, 4. *When I consider thy heavens, &c. What is man, &c.* 316, &c. What cannot be their true meanings, 318. They cannot be understood as spoken in diminution of man absolutely considered, *ibid.* They cannot be designed to lessen man in comparison of the heavens, 320. They do not imply, that reason would naturally lead one to think it beneath the majesty of God to regard his creature man, 323. They do not import any real danger of our being neglected and over-look'd amidst the immensity of God's works, 327. The true sense of the words largely considered, 329—348. Practical reflections, 348, 350, 351, 354, 356.

Psalms xxii. relates to the Messiah, 364.

Punishment, proper, has relation only to proper inherent guilt, 200.

R

REASON defined, and divided into *speculative* and *practical*, and the latter into what may be called *prudence* and *conscience*, 33. A distinction between *reason* and *reasoning*, 34. How the former may be attributed to God, and not the latter, *ibid.* The office of *reason* as a guardian to the body, 35. Two remarkable differences between it and *instinct*, 37. Its office as a guide to moral life, 39. In which respect it is principally concerned about fixing right principles, and forming just deductions from them, 40. Of the names whereby

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

- whereby the principles discoverable by the light of it are called, 42. How to determine what is *right reason*, 44, 45. It is the same in all, 47. It is uniform and constant, *ibid.* By it we determine moral good and evil, 48. It is entirely consistent and harmonious with divine revelation, and supernatural assistances, 54. Every rational being ought to govern himself by it, 57, &c. 72.
- Reason*, volition, and corporeal motion, of the relation between them, 116.
- Receiving one another*, in *Rom.* xv. 7. what it signifies, and how it may be applied to the terms of church-communion, 161.
- Religion*, the discarding the use of reason in it, a great fault, 56. How it degenerates into superstition, 79, &c.
- Resurrection*, a most important doctrine of christianity, 397. Ill consequences of denying it, 398, 399, 400.
- Revelation*, right reason entirely consistent with it, 54. It is a kind of supplement to reason, 56.
- Reward* promised in the gospel, its certainty and incomparable excellency, 446. The terms on which we may secure a title to it, 448.
- Rewards* and punishments amongst men, how the argument from them against necessity may be evaded, 117, 118.
- Ridicule*, Lord *Shaftsbury's* scheme concerning it refuted, 66. The talents of it and reason widely different, 66, 67. Humour as well as wit necessary to it, 68. It is as changeable as fashions, instanced in the ass and the owl, 68, 69. We ought not to begin with it, but reason should first point out the error, 72.
- Rights*, natural, and those not strictly such, 198.
- Roman* legions who revolted, the effect that the notion of fate had upon them, 97, 98.
- Rorarius*, his relations concerning wolves and lions, 117.

S

- Scriptures*, whence the prejudices against them arise, 71, 72.
- Self-condemned*, what it signifies, 179.

Self-

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

Self-love the strongest of the passions, 87. The difference between that which is purely mechanical, and that which is under the guidance of reason, 88, 89.

Seneca, an excellent passage of his, 283.

Shaftesbury, Lord, his scheme of *ridicule* examined and refuted, 65, &c.

Simplicity, an attribute of the necessarily existent Being, 11.

Sincerity, the christian's whole duty summed up in it, 163.

Sins, we can repent of none but our own, 214.

Societies, christian, their right of judging for themselves considered, 153. The importance of their exercising the greatest caution and charity, 156, 157. They have no right to reject christians from communion on the account of mere difference in opinion, neither separately nor conjointly, 164.

Solomon, an instance of the power of sensual passions, 298, 299.

Soul distinct from matter, as having a self-active and self-determining power within it, 237, 238. Its excellent nature, 320, 321. Its capacity, 322.

Space and extension considered, 9, 10, 11.

Spontaneity considered, 104, 105, 106.

Stars, their nature, distance, &c. 321.

Stoics, their notion of the three constituent parts of man, 58.

Subscribing to articles, &c. an argument against it, 177.

Sufferings of Christ should endear him to us, 389.

And may yield us instruction and consolation, 390.

Superstition, what it is, 79. The rise of it, 80. The effects of it, 81, 82. An instance of it in the absolute Predestinarians, 83. It is the original of atheism, 84, 85.

T

Temptations, we are concerned to lessen their number, and weaken their force as much as we can, 249.

Thirtieth of January, remarks upon its observation, 217, &c. Absurdity of perpetuating it, 222.

Thoughts must be governed, in order to govern our passions, 265.

V

Index to the preceding Volume of Tracts.

V

VICTORY of Christ, its perfection, 387.

Virtue, the placing it in a conformity to reason, is in effect placing it in a conformity to the will of God, 76.

Virtuous persons more happy than the vicious, though there were no life to come, 411. Or though they did not believe it, 414.

Visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children, &c. in the second commandment, considered, 200, 203, 204.

Understanding must be improved, in order to govern our passions, 263.

Uneasiness, the will not always determined by it, 130, 137.

Unity of God, of the arguments for it, from his infinity and necessary existence, 23. A plainer argument for it, 23, &c. See *God*.

Universal redemption, plainly revealed in scripture, 354.

W

WHITBY, doctor, his sense of God's forsaking Christ, 375.

Will, the only proper subject of moral good and evil, 49. It determines it self, and is not irresistibly determined by external causes, 128. Whether it *must* yield it self to the greatest appearing good, or *necessarily* follows the ultimate dictate of the practical understanding, 129, &c.

Wit and judgment very different, and seldom found in the same person, 67, 68.

Woolaston, Mr. by substituting *truth* in the room of the *nature of things*, differs only in words from other moral writers, 50, 51. The only thing new in his system, 52. Two things objected against it, 52, 53, 54.

Works of God, an exhortation to consider them, 348.

Z

ZENO, story of him and his slave, 118.

The End of the FOURTH VOLUME.

